



MEMOIRS OF GENERAL DE CAULAINCOURT  
DUKE OF VICENZA



THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

1811-1812



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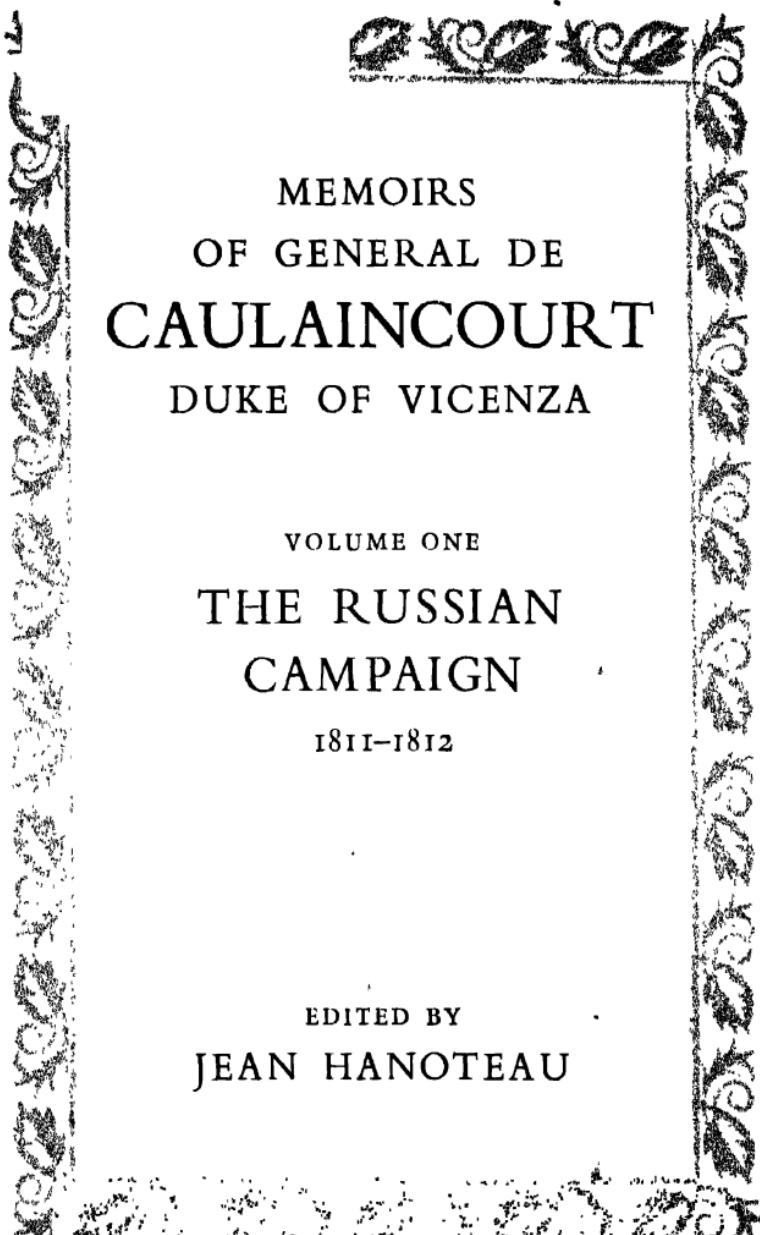
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MEMOIRS  
OF GENERAL DE  
**CAULAINCOURT**  
DUKE OF VICENZA

VOLUME ONE  
THE RUSSIAN  
CAMPAIGN

1811-1812

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*First published . . . . . 1915*

*Printed in Great Britain by  
Wyman & Sons, Ltd., London, Fakenham and Reading.*

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## INTRODUCTION

THE manor of Caulaincourt is situated some eight miles to the west of St. Quentin, among the woods and water meadows of the valley of the Omignon. The old château was destroyed in the Great War but the terrace remains, in front of the new château built a few years ago, and from it one looks across to the wooded hill of Trefcon and the domain still held by the Caulaincourts after seven centuries and more.

The family of Caulaincourt was one of the ancient manorial houses that formerly abounded in Picardy. It went back in unbroken line of descent to Jean de Caulaincourt who in 1362 held the estate in fief, and though documentary proof no longer exists, there is little doubt that this Jean was the direct lineal descendant of Raoul de Caulaincourt, whose name occurs in the rolls of 1080. Thus from medieval times the Caulaincourts held a sure place in the Picard squirearchy and petty nobility; many of them were Knights of Malta, all were soldiers, serving in the innumerable wars that made and broke so many great families in France. Their Vermand blood gave them that shrewdness allied to courage so characteristic of that often harsh race that has been the sport of half the wars in Europe. War has always been an element in the life of Picardy. The château of Caulaincourt was pillaged, sacked and burned down by the Spaniards in 1557; the building that replaced it, with many enlargements and embellishments, was pillaged and blown up by the Germans in 1917. Thus family and château shared in the vicissitudes of France and were symbolical of her history.

The Caulaincourts had acquired no great wealth but they had already become one of the more important families of the neighbourhood of St. Quentin when Gabriel Louis, father of the subject of this memoir, was born. This Gabriel Louis was an interesting man, and he played an important part in the early career of his distinguished son. Like all well-born

young men of those days he entered the army at a very early age and at eighteen was already aide-de-camp to Marshal Broglie. By the year 1788 he had been promoted brigadier-general. At the outbreak of the Revolution, Gabriel Louis de Caulaincourt embraced its principles with an enthusiasm hardly to be expected in one so bound by tradition to the feudal system. He offered his services to the Legislative Assembly and in 1792 was gazetted lieutenant-general in the Revolutionary Army. He was commanding at Arras when the Convention came into power, and it was there that he formally swore allegiance to the Constitution.

This was, however, the high tide of General de Caulaincourt's republican fervour, for his soldierly mind shuddered at the insubordination deliberately fostered, as it seemed to him, by the appointment of civil and political commissioners to supervise the army commands. A month or two after his promotion he obtained a short leave, to look after his affairs at Caulaincourt, and no sooner had he reached home than he sent in his papers on the score of ill health. He actually was suffering acutely from rheumatism, and the conditions in which the Revolutionary armies lived and fought were so crude and comfortless that his excuse was a perfectly valid one.

That the General was still in the good books of the Convention was proved by the fact that he went to live in Paris in that very ticklish year 1793, though during the actual months of the Terror during the following year he went into retirement in the village of Arcueil, a few miles out on the road to Sceaux. It was during those troublous times that General de Caulaincourt was able to give comfort, advice and help to the widow of one of his old companions in arms, Madame de Beauharnais. There was no lack of opportunity for exercising the duties of friendship where an adventuresome woman such as Josephine de Beauharnais was concerned, and the General was sometimes hard put to it to pilot her through difficult situations. Josephine never forgot her old friend, for when the tide turned and a twist of fate made her wife of the First Consul and then Empress of the French she saw to it that Gabriel Louis de Caulaincourt was nominated a Senator and,

in 1808, was created a Count of the Empire. The old Picard noble had borne his new-fangled honours but a matter of six months, however, when he died. His body was interred in the Pantheon, his heart still rests in the parish church of his own Caulaincourt.

It was while still a young captain in the Body Guard that Gabriel Louis married Anne Josephine de Barandier, daughter of an old Picard family with Savoyard origins. It was a suitable match and the marriage contract was signed in the presence of the King, the Dauphin, the royal brothers of Provence and Artois, Madame and the Mesdames of France and a number of princes and princesses of the Blood. There were five children of this marriage; the eldest was he who was destined to become Duke of Vicenza. The second was Auguste Jean Gabriel, a promising general of division in the Grand Army when he was killed in the redoubt of Borodino. On the eve of going to Russia, Auguste de Caulaincourt was married to Blanche d'Aubusson, a convent-bred girl, who left the cloister on her marriage morning to go to the altar, and returned thither as soon as the nuptial blessing had been given, while her bridegroom set off that same afternoon to join his division. He never returned, and she never again left the convent; virgin and widow, she passed the remaining twenty-five years of her life shut away from that world she had seen in so fleeting a glimpse. The remaining children of Gabriel Louis were three daughters; one died in youth, the others married well.

Thus Armand de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza and Master of the Horse to Napoleon, was of ancient stock with deep-rooted traditions and that sureness of self that comes after generations of ownership of an ancestral estate, after centuries of intermarriage and close association with similar families of a similar standing.

Caulaincourt, as it will henceforth be convenient to call the subject of this memoir, was born in the family château on December 9, 1773, and baptized in the parish church the following day. His early childhood was passed partly at Caulaincourt and partly at Versailles, where his mother had a house

which she occupied during her terms of duty as lady-in-waiting to the Countess of Artois. His father he hardly ever saw, for there were many inconveniences in taking a child to the garrison towns where he was serving. Such education as young Caulaincourt received was inevitably with a view to his future profession of arms, and he had barely reached his fifteenth year when he was entered in the crack Royal Etranger Regiment, at that time stationed at Arras. In 1789 he was promoted lieutenant in the regiment which by this time, under Revolutionary influence, had become the 7th Cavalry Regiment. Caulaincourt proved a promising officer and when, a couple of years later, he was appointed aide-de-camp to his father the General, his commanding officer, Theodor de Lameth, certified that the young officer had proved most efficient in taking the troops on parade at mounted and foot drill, and, although only nineteen years of age, had completely won the confidence of his senior officers.

Unfortunately his father's relinquishment of command and retirement from active service involved young Caulaincourt in some disagreeable way. In the confusion of the times it is impossible now to tell exactly what happened. There are so many contradictory attestations and statements that the actual facts are lost beyond hope of being ever made clear. The only certainty that emerges is that on August 24, 1793, Citizen Armand Caulaincourt was registered in the rank of sergeant-major in the 17th battalion of the 6th company of National Guards, stationed at Cambrai. After three months of this he was seconded to another battalion, and on February 16, 1794, was transferred to the 16th Regiment of Light Horse, at Hesdin. Two squadrons were serving in Kléber's army of the West in La Vendée and to one of these Caulaincourt was posted. He had been obliged to take down his stripes when he transferred from the National Guard to the cavalry, but no sooner was he with the horse than he was made corporal and in less than three months had been promoted squadron sergeant-major.

It was while on the way to join his regiment that young Caulaincourt met with an adventure that furnished him with

an anecdote he was very fond of relating in after years. He was passing through the main street of Angers when he was recognized by a red-hot Sansculotte who denounced him as a *ci-devant*, a suspect and a royalist, and had him cast into gaol. At the time feeling was running very high, the Girondins were about to fall and the Terror was brewing, so there is no knowing what his fate would have been had not the gaoler, whose wife had once been befriended by Caulaincourt's mother, smuggled the young man out in disguise and set him on the road to join his regiment. Some years later the Master of the Horse was accompanying his Emperor in a state progress through Holland when among those presented to Napoleon was the zealous Jacobin of Angers, now a very pious worshipper at the Imperial shrine. He started when he saw the man he had denounced, covered with decorations and occupying a position only second to that of the Emperor himself. But Caulaincourt merely smiled at him genially and observed, "I think we have met before, Monsieur; in the Year Two, was it not?"

Caulaincourt had not been long with his regiment when Kléber was succeeded in command by that valiant young warrior Hoche. Hoche saw that this squadron sergeant-major's abilities were being wasted in the hole-and-corner soldiering in La Vendée, and packed him off to the regimental depot at Soissons, with orders to take on the training of recruits and young officers. But Caulaincourt had only been at this work a month or two when he was appointed aide-de-camp by his father's old friend General Aubert-Dubayet, and to enable him to occupy this post he was gazetted by the Ministry of War as captain in the Cavalry. Nor did it end there. Aubert-Dubayet became Minister of War in 1795 and having taken a liking to his young aide-de-camp took him to Paris and promoted him major. But Aubert-Dubayet's reign at the Ministry was of brief duration; he was a conceited, useless sort of man and Carnot got rid of him in three months. To save his face he was appointed ambassador to the Sublime Porte and Caulaincourt was detailed to accompany him thither.

Aubert-Dubayet was a man who enjoyed pomp and ceremony. The journey to Constantinople was something of a triumphal procession, with fêtes and state entries at every city of importance they passed. But when they reached the walls of Stamboul they met with a check. The Porte was uncertain whether the French envoy was to be considered an Ambassador Extraordinary or just a plain ambassador, and until this fine point could be settled it was impossible to know exactly what degree of honour was to be paid to him. As it was a tricky question, and there seemed little hope of its being settled in less than a week, the General cut the matter short by entering the city after dark, without form or ceremony.

It was an odd experience in Caulaincourt's life, this embassy to Turkey, and one that he never looked back upon with anything but distaste. Scarcely had the party left Paris before dissension broke out among its members. Aubert-Dubayet was as vain and consequential as his aide-de-camp was reserved and self-sufficient. Thrust on one another's company as they necessarily were, they picked on each other's weak points with merciless fervour. The only thing they cordially agreed upon was that Caulaincourt should go back to France at the first opportunity. The chance came when the Turkish ambassador to France left Constantinople, and Caulaincourt was appointed his guide and master of ceremonies.

After a wearisome voyage that took seven weeks to accomplish—during which they were boarded by a Barbary pirate who went off with a flea in his ear when he found the Sultan's representative on board—they reached Marseilles. Here fresh troubles beset them, for the whole party was put into quarantine for thirty-six days, and the ambassador took this as personal affront to himself and an insult to his sovereign. Caulaincourt's task of amusing the irate pasha and soothing his wounded vanity was a trying one that was not rendered easier by the Turk's petulance and unvaried bad temper. To add to his difficulties, Caulaincourt's allowance for expenses incurred on the journey was meagre, for the Directory was far from wealthy, and the ambassador, accustomed to

the lavish spending of money in the East, felt ever more and more slighted as he perceived the parsimony with which his guide was obliged to consider the slightest outlay. But he was somewhat mollified by the sensation his arrival caused in Paris. Crowds thronged the streets to witness his solemn entry, and the Directory had a special wooden stand, draped and beflagged, erected in the courtyard of the Luxembourg, from which a galaxy of beautiful high-waisted ladies could witness and applaud his formal reception by Barras and the other Directors.

Having delivered his ambassador, Caulaincourt was now unemployed. The pasha's request that his conductor should be given promotion was dismissed by the Directory and he was glad to accept the post of aide-de-camp to his uncle, General d'Harville, at that time inspector of cavalry in the Army of Germany. This was a life thoroughly to his liking. "So far as I am concerned," he wrote to his aunt, "the discomforts of being always on the move, the incessant rain, the freezing cold, count as nothing compared with my love of a wandering life, the thrill of first setting eyes on a new place or a fresh bit of country." But even these pleasures he threw by the board directly it was rumoured that his old regiment, the 8th Cavalry, was detailed for the Army of the Invasion of England. This plan, so dear to Hoche and Carnot, never got so far advanced as Napoleon's plan of a few years later; before they had so much as caught a glimpse of the Channel, Caulaincourt and his men were turned about and marched down to the Rhine at Constance.

But his luck was on the turn, and in July, 1799, Caulaincourt was gazetted to the command of the 2nd Carabiniers. At last he was to see action! In that autumn and winter of 1799 there was stiff fighting along the Rhine, and the Carabiniers were in the thick of it. Encounters with the enemy were mostly skirmishes not worthy the name of engagements, but they were fought with a ferocity and eagerness often lacking in great set battles. It was in a hot action round a mill near Heilbronn that Caulaincourt got his first wound, a scratch that laid him up a couple of days at most. At Weinheim,

a month later, he and his orderly were out one day reconnoitring when they were surprised by an enemy patrol. Fortunately a troop of Carabiniers came up in time, but not before Caulaincourt had been severely wounded. Operations began again early in the next spring, and once more the Colonel was hit. He went on with the campaign, but it was with considerably diminished zest, for he was beginning to grow out of touch with Republican methods and ideas. Indeed, there must have been a strong leaven of discontent in those Republican armies, especially in that of the Rhine, where Moreau was in command.

On December 3, 1800, was fought the Battle of Hohenlinden. Caulaincourt was at the head of his Carabiniers and led one of the decisive charges of the day. As token of his appreciation Moreau declared his intention of making him brigadier-general on the field. But Caulaincourt refused this promotion as he had no wish to leave his regiment in the middle of a campaign. He was, too, attached to Moreau, and a rise in rank might well have meant recall or transfer to another army. It is a curious detail, due perhaps to this devotion to Moreau, that no letter of Caulaincourt's at this time so much as mentions the name of Napoleon Bonaparte. Yet he was soon to see the man who was to make his future.

Colonel de Caulaincourt was still at Lunéville, where the treaty that followed Hohenlinden was signed, when he received orders from the First Consul to proceed at once to Paris and report to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He started for the capital without delay, and on October 14, 1801, was admitted to an interview with Talleyrand. There he was told that Bonaparte had decided to send him at once to St. Petersburg as bearer of a personal letter to the Emperor of Russia.

The position between Russia and France had long been one of extreme delicacy. Since 1792 diplomatic relations had been completely severed, and since July, 1798, the two countries had actually been at war with one another. But when the Emperor Paul's friendship with Austria came to an end, Bonaparte perceived an opportunity for winning a powerful ally. The Tsar was no less willing to clear up an

unsatisfactory situation, and sent a couple of trusted envoys to Paris to treat for peace. The assassination of Paul put an end for the time being to these pourparlers, but Bonaparte took the opportunity of Alexander's accession to the throne to send his aide-de-camp, Duroc, to St. Petersburg with his felicitations. Duroc did his work well, and on October 10, 1801, a treaty and secret convention was signed in Paris, "fixing the basis of common action between Russia and France for the general well-being of Europe." It was immediately after the signatures to this instrument had been exchanged that Caulaincourt was commissioned to take a letter to the Tsar. His instructions, dated October 14, were that, having delivered the letter to Alexander he was to express verbally "the firm disposition of the French Government to cultivate with the utmost care the good understanding and friendly spirit that are being so happily established between the two States." He was told to announce the forthcoming appointment of a minister plenipotentiary, and was expressly forbidden to leave St. Petersburg before that minister should appear on the scene.

No doubt Caulaincourt had his father's old friend Josephine to thank for the appointment to this responsible mission, for the First Consul could have known little of him save that he was one of Moreau's confidential officers—no great recommendation, to say the least of it. Talleyrand may have remembered him in connexion with the Constantinople affair, but there must have been many with a greater claim on his favour.

Caulaincourt chose a brother officer, Captain Berckheim, to accompany him, and they left Paris on October 18. Winter had already set in and the roads were so heavy with mud and slush that it took them twelve days to get to Berlin and another three weeks to reach St. Petersburg. Two days later, on November 19, he was admitted to an audience with the Tsar and delivered his letter. He was graciously received and in the interview were laid the foundations of the friendship that ever remained between himself and Alexander. But his mission was by no means ended. For six months he was

kept in St. Petersburg, visiting the various ministers, occasionally waiting on the Tsar, and all the while enjoying a succession of social fêtes and frivolities that left him in amazement at the pleasure-loving nature of the Russians. At last, on May 23, 1802, he was granted his farewell audience of the Emperor. His successor had arrived and in his first letter back to France paid ample tribute to Caulaincourt's skill and tact in paving the way for him; "I cannot speak too highly of Colonel Caulaincourt," he wrote. "He has achieved so much and behaved so irreproachably."

Talleyrand had told him to choose his own route back to France. He hesitated between travelling by way of Stockholm or coming south through Warsaw and Vienna. "On the one hand curious places to see, on the other, pretty women to meet," as he told his aunt. The pretty women won the day and he returned by Vienna. On the way back to Paris he met a courier at Wiesbaden bearing his appointment as aide-de-camp to the First Consul.

This was indeed a substantial reward. There were only eight aides-de-camp, and though the old intimacy no longer existed that had made General Bonaparte's staff one large family, the officers in attendance on the First Consul saw a personal side of him that few others knew anything about. Caulaincourt was soon an outstanding figure in this small circle, for he had a singular aptitude for organization and the First Consul greatly appreciated his skill in arranging State visits and inspections. He was promoted brigadier-general on August 29, 1803, and shortly afterwards was made Inspector-General of the Stables. The Consular Court was fast assuming a regal appearance; monarchy was in the air.

It was at this juncture that one of the major events of Caulaincourt's life took place. The outbreak of war between France and England, early in 1803, had drawn various Bourbon princes to London, where they offered to raise and command a force to fight under the English flag. Among the men thus attracted were Georges Cadoudal, leader of the Breton royalists, and General Pichegru, who had escaped from Cayenne, whither he had been deported after an unsuccessful plot against

the Directory. With characteristic cunning Fouché, Minister of Police, allowed Cadoudal and Pichegrus to walk into the trap he had laid for them in Paris, and the revelations the former made under cross-examination presented the First Consul with justification for frightening the Royalists by a deed which would show his determination to put a stop once and for all to the incessant plots against his government.

During the afternoon of March 10, 1804, the First Consul summoned a council of war, and late that night dictated his orders. The Duke of Enghien, son of the Prince of Condé and nephew of Égalité Orléans, was living in retirement in the village of Ettenheim, just across the Baden frontier. He was a harmless soul, finding perfect contentment in hunting and shooting, but he was the only Bourbon to hand and it was decided that he should be made an example of.

The whole affair was worked out in the Tuileries in the fullest detail. General Ordener, commanding the Mounted Grenadiers of the Consular Guard, was to proceed to Rheinau, take 300 men of the 22nd Dragoons, furnished with four days' rations, across the Rhine, march on Ettenheim, and capture the Duke of Enghien and any other people of note who might happen to be staying with him. (To give colour to the whole affair a rumour was circulated that Dumouriez was working up a conspiracy beneath the Duke's roof.) On the same day and at the same hour General de Caulaincourt was to take 200 men of the 26th Dragoons and 30 gendarmes, march to Offenburg, surround the town and arrest the Baroness de Reich, who was known to be a conspirator, and some other English agents. A third detachment, 300 cavalry and 4 guns, was detailed to watch the Rhine crossing and give help to the others if needed. Finally, when he had accomplished his task at Offenburg, Caulaincourt was to send out patrols to Ettenheim and assist Ordener if necessary. According to Méneval, the First Consul's secretary, Caulaincourt was present when these orders were written out, but he had not been let into the secret and only knew the very barest outline of what was afoot. He had no idea that the Duke of Enghien was to be brought back to France to meet his death.

Ordener reached Strasbourg during the night of March 12-13 and was joined by Caulaincourt the following evening. Ordener had made his arrangements, and at 5 a.m. on the 15th a party of troops surrounded the Duke's house, pushed their way in, forced their astonished prisoner into a coach, and bore him away to the citadel of Strasbourg, where they arrived between four and five o'clock in the afternoon.

Caulaincourt, meanwhile, was out spy-hunting. He rounded up a number of suspected agents and *émigrés* at Offenburg; the Baroness de Reich had already been arrested by the Grand Duke of Baden, but her papers fell into the hands of the French. At the same time he carried out various commissions entrusted to him by Talleyrand, such as arranging for light boats to be built for the invasion of England, regulating the passage of the Rhine, and so forth. Having accomplished his work at Offenburg, he went back to Strasburg and entered the citadel during the evening of the 15th; a few hours after Ordener had arrived there with his prisoner.

While the two generals were discussing what was to be done next, far away in Paris the First Consul was dictating an order to Caulaincourt instructing him to send whoever had been arrested in Ettenheim under a strong guard to Paris. This order reached Strasburg at seven o'clock in the evening of the 17th, and Caulaincourt immediately sent Major Charlot of the 38th Squadron of Alsace Gendarmes instructions to detail an escort of an officer and two men to conduct "Henri de Plessis" to Paris. He was told to show the prisoner "all the respect due to misfortune and pay him such attentions as were compatible with ensuring his safe-keeping." Thus it was that at half-past one in the morning of March 18, "Henri de Plessis," Duke of Enghien, set out to meet his fate. After he had left, a red morocco pocket-book and a little red notebook that had belonged to him were handed to Caulaincourt, but this was his only actual connexion with the prisoner; during the time they were under the same roof in the citadel of Strasburg Caulaincourt never so much as set eyes on the unfortunate man.

The following day Caulaincourt himself started for Paris.

He stopped a few hours at his old garrison town of Lunéville, to dine with the officers of the 2nd Carabiniers, and reached Malmaison on March 21, some time before dinner. The Duke of Enghien was already in his grave in the moat of Vincennes, having been shot at three o'clock that same morning.

Caulaincourt was flabbergasted when Josephine told him the news. Not only was he horrified at the actual deed, for he appreciated to the full what that high-handed piece of lawlessness involved, but he realized that all unwittingly he himself was deeply implicated in it. White and trembling he turned to Josephine in a sort of frenzy. "Why, oh why," he cried; "did I have to be mixed up in this fatal business!" A moment later, turning to Madame de Rémusat with tears streaming down his checks, "You will hate me now," he said; "yet I am only unfortunate, not guilty—yet how unfortunate!"

Nor did he confine his bitter remarks to the women. Hortense relates that he spoke in similar terms to the First Consul and met Bonaparte's advances and attempts to mend matters with a stern aloofness that bid fair to end in an open rupture. Never in the Consular or Imperial Court did any man venture to show his feelings in the presence of the Master as Caulaincourt showed his stupefaction, rage, despair at finding himself involved in this shameful tragedy.

His forebodings were fulfilled. No sooner was the news of the Duke of Enghien's arrest and execution made public than blame and abuse were hurled at Caulaincourt. Few had ever heard of General Ordener, the man who actually went to Ettenheim, but Caulaincourt was a prominent member of the First Consul's suite and it was sufficient for him to have been even in the neighbourhood for the entire responsibility for carrying out the coup to be thrust on his shoulders. In his despatch announcing the murder, Cobenzl, the Austrian ambassador, said that Caulaincourt was in sole command of the troops who seized the Duke; Oubril, the Russian chargé d'affaires, wrote home to the same effect. The *émigrés*, who had long been incensed that one of their own rank, the head of an ancient feudal family, should be the trusted aide-de-camp

of the Usurper, seized on this chance to throw mud and disseminate exaggerations and lies that were sometimes so gross that they deceived no one. Nor was it merely a passing cloud. For the rest of his life Caulaincourt's name lay under its shadow, he was dogged by the scandal to his dying day. "The reproach of having been involved in this catastrophe," one of his friends said, "brought untold bitterness into his life. Frequently he used to recount the disagreeable incidents that arose from the resentment of those who never troubled to discover the true facts." One night he was at a ball given by Madame Récamier and took the floor with Mademoiselle Charlot, the beauty of the season. Immediately a space was left around the couple, men and women pointedly shrinking back from them. Caulaincourt turned white with rage, and having handed back his partner, who pleaded faintness, to her chaperon he strode from the house. To make matters worse, he was unable to say anything to justify himself or explain the true facts, for the First Consul imposed a strict silence on the whole Ettenheim business, and Caulaincourt knew better than to disobey. His mouth closed officially he could only stare coldly when looked on askance, and hope that time would clear his name. On his deathbed the calumny embittered his last hours. Two days before he died he summoned the notary who was to draft his will, and three other persons—two of them old companions in arms. Lying on the little iron camp-bed that had been given him by the Emperor, he said: "There is a preliminary statement I have to make. I die the victim of calumny. My enemies have tried to kill me with pin-pricks, and they have succeeded. They have reproached me with the death of the Duke of Enghien. Pay careful heed to my words, Gentlemen; they are the words of a dying man, and one does not tell lies with death staring one in the face. I swear upon my honour that I had nothing whatever to do with the arrest or the death of the Duke of Enghien."

The full truth of the Enghien tragedy will never be known, for Napoleon kept the dossier of papers concerning it in his private study in the Tuileries, and when the Allies were marching on Paris in 1814 he had them burned. During the hurried

days of the First Restoration, Talleyrand went through the archives in the office of the Secretary of State and burned two hundred portfolios of secret documents concerning events during the Empire that might have compromised himself or his friends. But ample proof remains to confirm Caulaincourt's dying repudiation of any responsibility for the murder.

Two months after the death of the Duke of Enghien Napoleon Bonaparte, First Consul, became Napoleon Emperor of the French. The organization of the Imperial Court was one of the first things to be undertaken, for Napoleon intended that it should be numerous and brilliant, worthy of France and her first Emperor. His uncle Fesch was appointed Grand Almoner; Talleyrand, Grand Chamberlain; Duroc, Grand Marshal of the Palace; Berthier, Grand Master of the Hunt; Ségar, Master of Ceremonies. To these august ranks was added, by a decree of July 10, 1804, General de Caulaincourt, who became Master of the Horse.

The Master of the Horse held no merely ornamental sinecure in the Imperial Court. He was directly responsible for the good condition and satisfactory working of all the Emperor's stables. He had charge of the pages about the Court and was particularly charged with their proper training and discipline. All the couriers and despatch riders were under his orders, and to organize these was, in itself, an onerous and difficult task during the Emperor's continual campaigns and State progresses, when he rarely spent more than a night in any one place yet required the papers and despatches from Paris to be on his table at the appointed hour every day. The Master of the Horse was responsible for the Emperor's personal equipment and harness, arms, etc.; he had entire control and management of the Imperial stud at Saint Cloud. Every detail of the various journeys had to be arranged by him; it was his duty to accompany His Majesty and, in the constable's absence, carry the Imperial sword. After a time he was given the supervision of the orderly officers about the Emperor's person.

The Master of the Horse's duties were laid down with the utmost clarity and precision. If the Emperor's charger were

killed in action, it was the duty of the Master to dismount and give him his own. When on campaign, his quarters had to be as near the Emperor's as possible so that he could take his orders the last thing at night and first thing in the morning. When the Emperor was in the saddle the Master's place was at the horse's crupper, on the near side, while the colonel-general in waiting was on the off-side. On the road the Master's carriage immediately preceded that of the Emperor. In French territory, during times of peace, he had the right of entry to the Imperial presence. It was his duty to push forward His Majesty's chair when he sat down to table and withdraw it when he rose. He was at the Emperor's right hand when he mounted on horseback or entered his carriage, tendering him his whip, the reins, and the near stirrup.

At the time these honours were thrust upon him Caulaincourt held no higher military rank than that of brigadier-general, but on February 1, 1805, he was promoted general of division. It was murmured spitefully in certain quarters that this was his reward for what he had done at Ettenheim, but there is no reason to suppose that such was the case. He was, it is true, only thirty-one years of age, but he had seen seventeen years' active service, had fought in thirteen campaigns and been wounded twice. Apart from this, the two and a half years he had passed in close attendance on Napoleon and the confidence he had inspired were ample justification for such rapid promotion. Moreover, the exalted position he held in the Imperial Court demanded that he should be of suitable rank. It was on that account that he was passed rapidly through the various grades of the Legion of Honour, being given the Grand Cordon on its creation, February 1, 1805.

Amid the new and sometimes garish splendour of the Court Caulaincourt cut a fine and dignified figure. Generations of ancestors accustomed to the etiquette and formality of Versailles had bequeathed to him a sureness of comportment and ease of behaviour that many a new Duke or Marshal envied. In person he was tall and slender; Méneval describes him as habitually calm and serious in demeanour; the Duchess

of Abrantès says he was, "as good company as any man in France." Mademoiselle Avrillon calls him "gallant, and attractive in his person, uniting the formality of the old Court to the more genuine values of the Emperor's military Court."

Behind his courtesy and refinement, however, was an invincible determination and self-confidence. Napoleon said he was like an iron bar that could only be bent in the furnace. Yet an acute observer considered that his determination was largely the obstinacy of a naturally timid man, doing his utmost to hide his fears and shyness. This would explain the extreme susceptibility of his nature, that was hurt more by the pin-pricks of gossip than by the harsher blows of fate.

With all his affability and easiness of manner Caulaincourt was not popular at Court. "He was a little too certain of his own superiority," says the Duchess of Abrantès, "and this gave him a reserve and self-contained air that fools who knew no better took for conceit." The Enghien affair left its mark in a permanent sadness and distrust of his fellow-men. Yet he was naturally benevolent, and performed countless kind actions known only to the recipients.

Napoleon himself never cared for Caulaincourt. He respected his integrity, but he could not feel at home with him. A Prussian officer who had been with them throughout the campaign of 1813 wrote: "While fully recognizing Caulaincourt's qualities and abilities I think Bonaparte was less reserved with Duroc. The former was no less devoted to his master, but he was too cold and reserved, too bound by etiquette, whereas Duroc knew when to forget formality. On the other hand Caulaincourt spoke frankly to Napoleon and openly discussed matters which others dared not mention for fear of falling into disgrace."

De Norvins tells an anecdote that illustrates very clearly the characters of Napoleon and his Master of Horse. In April, 1805, the Emperor went to Milan to receive the crown of Italy. On the way thither he took "a couple of days' leave" to visit Brienne and look up some of his schoolboy haunts. One morning he went out on his Arab, broke into a gallop, and left his companions far behind while he went careering

across field and woodland. Caulaincourt and his suite searched for him for three hours until the Master of the Horse had the idea of firing a pistol to attract his attention. Napoleon came back to his officers "laughing and chuckling with delight at the thought that he, the master of forty million people, had managed to be his own master for three whole hours." Nor was Caulaincourt's solicitude confined to such trivial moments. In October, 1813, they were walking in the forest of Hanau when a shell fell close to them. "The Duke of Vicenza instantly interposed his own body between Napoleon and the shell, going on talking as if nothing had happened." In 1812, at one of the worst moments of the Retreat, between Beredikino and Smolensk, the Emperor's postillion broke his leg. The Master of the Horse took his place and drove on in the freezing temperature, taking no notice of the incident to the Emperor but reporting at the end of the stage as though nothing had happened.

For the next three years the Master of the Horse scarcely left the Emperor's side. He was with him in the splendid pageant of the coronation in Italy, through the glorious campaigns of Austerlitz, Jena, Eylau, and Friedland. Once or twice he was sent on diplomatic errands—to Russia, Danzig, Turkey—but his duty lay with the Emperor's person and in the Imperial Court.

Caulaincourt had enjoyed considerable success among the ladies of Josephine's Court before he first set eyes on Madame de Canisy, but from that moment until his death no other woman existed for him. Adrienne Hervé Louise de Carbonnel de Canisy was at that time just twenty, eleven years younger than Caulaincourt. She was of an ancient Norman family. Her mother went to the guillotine the same day as Madame Elizabeth, the dead King's sister, leaving Adrienne and her young sister to the care of a Minim Brother, who placed them in a respectable boarding-school at Chaillot. She was only thirteen years and three months old when her father, a man who seemed obsessed with the belief that there was no family like that of de Canisy in the whole of France, took her from school and made her marry her uncle, his brother,

Louis Emmanuel de Canisy. This worthy but elderly man, avoided by his acquaintances as an intolerable bore, left his young wife soon after she had borne him two children. It may be added that her sister was, in like manner, married off to another of her father's brothers, thus preserving the blood of the Canisys from admixture with less rarefied stock.

On September 23, 1805, Madame de Canisy was appointed lady-in-waiting to the Empress Josephine. Her appearance at Court created a sensation. "Tall, with a lovely figure, eyes and hair of the deepest black, beautiful teeth, a slightly aquiline and well-shaped nose, perfect complexion, there was something imposing—almost arrogant—about her beauty." Madame de Rémusat says, "she stunned the Court with her loveliness"; Castellane goes further, "I often went to Madame de Canisy's house. She was a brilliant woman with a very fine character. Her beauty was remarkable, for she combined all the elegance of a perfect figure with a flawless symmetry of feature." To conclude with Mdlle Avrillon's comment: "she had a delightful nature and a gentleness of manner that was even more seductive than her beauty and wit."

Caulaincourt fell in love with Madame de Canisy when he was introduced to her. Many were the female plans to catch such an eligible *parti* as the Master of the Horse, and the Empress herself put forward various ladies as suitable matches; but Caulaincourt never gave any of them a second thought. Nor was Madame de Canisy less enamoured. She asked to be allowed to divorce her husband, from whom she had long been separated, on the grounds that when she gave her consent to a union with her uncle she was far too young to know what she was really doing. But Napoleon would not hear of it. When she found out how matters stood Josephine exerted her influence in their favour; Talleyrand and Duroc both pleaded the young couple's cause, but it was not until 1813 that the Emperor gave his consent to the civil divorce. The marriage was finally annulled in the religious courts on August 4, 1813, whereupon Madame de Canisy was forced to resign her position near the Empress—for she occupied the same post with Marie Louise that she had enjoyed with Josephine—and leave

the Court. Even then the Emperor refused his permission for Caulaincourt to marry her, on the somewhat curious pretext that he would have no divorced persons in his *entourage*. It was not until 1814, when all was finished and he was about to leave Fontainebleau, that he acknowledged the debt he owed to Caulaincourt's loyalty and faithful service by granting his consent. The constant lovers were married on May 24, 1814, and were thereafter scarcely ever parted for so much as a day.

When, in 1807, Napoleon sent his aide-de-camp Savary to St. Petersburg, ostensibly in the simple capacity of a general officer attached to the Tsar's person, he gave him instructions to observe the Russian Court carefully and take note of what sort of an ambassador would be most suitable. Savary reported that the person for the post must be of noble birth, a man of the world, cultured, and able to entertain lavishly and with distinction, for St. Petersburg society was accustomed to judge a man according to the splendour of his receptions.

After some consideration Napoleon decided that his Master of the Horse was the one who best fulfilled these requirements. Caulaincourt was in despair. He did not desire the responsibility, and he did not want to leave Paris. He even toyed with the idea of leaving the service and marrying Madame de Canisy with or without the Imperial permission. On the other hand, his experience in the Enghien affair warned him of the storm of gossip that would involve not only himself but also Madame de Canisy if he took such a course. Neither Duroc's intervention nor the Emperor's insistence finally made him acquiesce; it was just soldierly obedience to a formal order. On November 3, 1807, he was officially designated ambassador extraordinary, with an allowance of 800,000 francs and a special grant of 250,000 francs to meet the expenses of installing himself in the post. Six weeks later, on December 17, he arrived in St. Petersburg, where he was received as no ambassador had ever been received before. The Tsar put at his disposal the enormous and sumptuous Wolkonsky Palace, lavishly furnished and magnificently appointed. It was a town in itself, Caulaincourt wrote home,

far eclipsing any residence he had ever seen. Every day the Tsar's intendant of palaces visited him to learn if there was anything he could do to oblige him.

It is at this point in his life that Caulaincourt's *Memoirs* begin, and in this brief notice there is no occasion to dwell on his political activities in Russia.

Caulaincourt was granted an audience to present his letters of credence on December 20 and thenceforward was a constant visitor to the Palace, both to State functions and to private parties. It seemed as though the Tsar could not do enough to honour him and prove his friendship. But St. Petersburg society was less eager in its welcome. The stigma of the Enghien murder still clung, and animosity against him was diligently fostered by émigrés who had taken refuge in Russia. So marked was this feeling that Caulaincourt took the unusual step of submitting the proofs of his innocence to the Tsar and obtained from His Majesty a letter expressing complete belief in his innocence in the matter of the Duke of Enghien's death.

Stern and cold though he seemed by nature, Caulaincourt took full advantage of his instructions to make a show. He spent his allowance and plunged into debt in an endeavour to impress Russian society. His horses and carriages were superb, he kept open table and employed a chef, Tardif by name, whose creations were immortalized by Pushkin and his brother poets, and were famous throughout Russia. One night during the course of a sumptuous supper to 400 guests, pears were produced at 300 francs apiece.

His friendship with Alexander, his sympathy with the Russian character, and his understanding of Russian problems irritated Napoleon. "You may be in Russia," he wrote, "but do remain a Frenchman." Yet his reliance and confidence in Caulaincourt remained unbroken, and on March 19, 1808, he created him Duke of Vicenza. The news was conveyed to him by the Tsar in person. "Allow me to congratulate you, my dear General," he said as they stood together on parade. "You are Duke of Vicenza! It doubles my pleasure in being the first to inform you of it. It is the

Emperor Alexander who is the first to address you as 'Monsieur le Duc'!"

Caulaincourt had been in St. Petersburg only a few months when he was instructed to deliver the famous letter from Napoleon to Alexander in which the former proposed that the two Powers, France and Russia, should divide the Ottoman Empire between them, invading Asia and bringing England to her knees. A plan of such magnitude clearly demanded a personal interview between the two Emperors, and after much negotiating Caulaincourt induced the Tsar to meet the Emperor of the French at Erfurt on September 27. The conference and its results are dealt with in the *Memoirs*. Before it broke up Caulaincourt besought Napoleon to relieve him of his task and allow him to return to duty in Paris. But his entreaties were in vain, and on October 14, 1808, he left Erfurt side by side with the Tsar in the Imperial coach. They travelled together as far as Leipzig; from there the ambassador made his way back to St. Petersburg.

Caulaincourt has been accused of political blindness, of having been duped by the Tsar and deluded by his ostentatious friendliness. But the hard-headed Picard was not taken in so easily. In a private letter to Napoleon he says of Alexander: "He is a difficult man to sum up. He appears to be weak but is really far from being so. No doubt he is able to put up with many reverses and conceal his chagrin, but there are limits even to this side of his character. He will never go outside the circle he has drawn for himself . . . beneath all his natural benevolence, honesty, and natural loyalty, beneath all his exalted ideas and principles, there is a strong element of *royal dissimulation* born of an obstinacy that nothing can conquer." But Caulaincourt was not after all, a trained diplomat, and though he saw through most of the Tsar's pretexts and excuses for enlarging his army it was impossible that he should not at the same time be disarmed by that monarch's really embarrassing friendliness.

As time went on this friendliness began to change its character. Alexander, it is true, never appeared to waver in his personal affection for Caulaincourt, but as Napoleon

gradually turned from a potential enemy into a declared adversary the Tsar began to confine his conversations to the ambassador to purely intimate matters, and with increasing reluctance mentioned political questions. At last Caulaincourt could get nothing out of him but the merest diplomatic platitudes. On March 3, 1811, he wrote to Champagny: "My situation here is more embarrassing than ever. No doubt circumstances will prove to the Emperor that my position is no longer tenable, though I must confess the honour paid to me as his ambassador is in no degree diminished. But the difference between my present existence and that of a few months ago is too great not to be noticed. Notwithstanding that his outward behaviour and his consideration for me are apparently the same as heretofore—perhaps, indeed, more punctiliously demonstrated than of yore—I can sense that in his heart the Tsar feels so differently toward me that I can no longer be of use in this place, and indeed it is becoming impossible for me to stay here much longer. . . . Anyone else would occupy my post better than I can."

Caulaincourt's position was not made easier by his relations with his own government. Napoleon was cold and unsympathetic; after a time he ceased to write personally and left all communications to pass through the hands of Fouché and Champagny, who disliked Caulaincourt and took every opportunity of irritating or injuring him. Nor was any notice taken of his incessant demands to be relieved until the spring of 1811, when the Emperor sent Lauriston to take his place. At the farewell audience of the Tsar something of the old friendship and intimacy was renewed that gave Caulaincourt greater pleasure than the costly gifts with which he was loaded. After a sorrowful parting with many good friends he had made in St. Petersburg, he took his departure. He reached Paris at nine o'clock on the morning of June 5 and a couple of hours later was admitted to an audience with the Emperor that lasted seven hours. He himself gives an account of this interview in the *Memoirs*. "Never," says Albert Vandal, "had Napoleon been talked to in such a way; never had the dangers towards which he was drifting been pointed

out to him with such clearness." But the Emperor was in no mood to listen. "You are a Russian, are you not?" he said at last with a sneer, and paid no further heed to what his ambassador was saying.

The next day Caulaincourt took up once more his functions as Master of the Horse, and as a Grand Officer of the Crown assisted at the ceremony of the christening of the King of Rome. Though the Emperor made no attempt to hide his resentment at one of his own servants having dared to differ from him he nevertheless paid tribute to the excellence of the plans worked out by his Master of the Horse for the State progress through Holland in the autumn of 1811, and at heart appreciated to the full the impenetrable silence with which Caulaincourt guarded any secret entrusted to him.

The winter of 1811-12 was a particularly brilliant season at the Tuileries. Like a candle that flares up brightly just before its final flicker, the Imperial Court flashed out more flamboyantly than ever before. But on May 9, 1812, the Emperor left for Dresden, accompanied by Caulaincourt and the rest of his suite, and on June 23 they were all under canvas on the banks of the Niemen. The Russian campaign had begun.

Caulaincourt's narrative of the march to Moscow and the Retreat occupies the greater part of the first volume of his *Memoirs*. No man ever enjoyed such close personal contact with Napoleon as fell to his lot when he was chosen to be His Majesty's sole companion and to share his carriage on the hurried journey back from Smorgoni to Paris. Even the faithful companions at St. Helena passed hours, sometimes days, without exchanging more than a few words with their Master; but during that fourteen days' drive along the interminable Polish and German high roads Napoleon and Caulaincourt were together every minute of the day and night. The Emperor never stopped talking. He felt the need of unburdening himself, and knew he could do so with safety to his companion. At St. Helena all he had to speak about belonged to the past; as they drove through that dreary winter landscape, and Napoleon was ticking off the hours till he could reach Paris, it was the present that mattered. He was

still the Man of Destiny, his views of people and events were still those of one who claimed to control them.

Caulaincourt made a good listener. He appreciated the responsibility that went with this great opportunity and neither toaded to the Emperor nor wantonly opposed him. He invariably expressed his own views and opinions with perfect freedom but with tact and understanding. He understood the weaknesses of this, the greatest of men; he knew the limits within which early environment and training could circumscribe even a Napoleon. He appreciated the importance of recording faithfully what transpired during that journey and the observations reported by him were actually Napoleon's own words. Apart from its political significance, Caulaincourt's narrative of the incidents that happened during the drive is singularly entertaining.

After their return to Paris, Caulaincourt's time for the rest of the winter was fully occupied in his Court duties. On April 5, 1813, he was nominated a senator; ten days later he left for Mayence in the same carriage as the Emperor.

The Campaign of Germany made a heavy addition to his work. Duroc was killed at Bautzen and for some months the duties of Grand Marshal were united to those of Master of the Horse. Even more onerous was the clerical work that fell to him. Napoleon had left his Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Duke of Bassano, in Paris and Caulaincourt had to take his place at Imperial headquarters. Nominally all diplomatic papers passed through his hands, but actually he was little more than a clerk, for the Emperor kept every matter in his own control and dictated practically all the despatches.

Napoleon had, however, occasion for Caulaincourt's services in a larger field. Greatly as he disliked his ambassador's intimacy with the Tsar it now occurred to him to make use of it in starting negotiations with Russia. On May 17 he gave him instructions to ascertain Alexander's views and furnished him with a sealed letter giving him full powers to conclude an armistice. On the 18th Caulaincourt was at Macdonald's outposts, where he awaited a reply to his application for an audience. The next day an answer came from

Miloradovich, acting on orders from the Tsar, regretting that it was impossible to say when it would be convenient to grant an interview! But the Battle of Bautzen, fought the following day, gave the Russian Court occasion to reflect a little more deeply. Nesselrode expressed the Tsar's regrets that he could not express his feelings personally, but at the same time referred M. de Caulaincourt to—Vienna! In reply, Caulaincourt wrote—at Napoleon's dictation—that for himself he had had no thought of diplomacy in mind when he requested an interview, though it chanced that he had taken with him powers to sign an armistice—and still had, as a matter of fact, those powers. This was enough for the Tsar; he told Nesselrode to reply that negotiations could be opened with any officer accredited.

Caulaincourt went to Neudorf on the morning of May 29, and a day later met Shuvalov and Kleist. The Russians proved very difficult to deal with and once or twice negotiations were actually broken off. But at eleven o'clock on the morning of June 4 an armistice was concluded for two months. On Metternich's arrival in Dresden this was prolonged to August 10, while Napoleon accepted the mediation of Austria and agreed to the summoning of a Congress at Prague.

Much against his will Caulaincourt was appointed the French representative at this Congress. He realized that sacrifices would be demanded of the Emperor, and he knew how hard it would be to secure them. It was all very well for Napoleon to say, "For the sake of securing a general peace I am prepared to make great sacrifices, since they will be amply compensated by the advantages of a long period of quiet and the flourishing of commerce"; but it was a very different matter to decide what these sacrifices were to be. Caulaincourt felt that Austria must be mollified by the gift of Illyria, and that the Emperor must give up his protectorship of Germany. Napoleon said that not for one moment could he contemplate such sacrifices; in any case, he added, it would be time to consider them when he was asked to make them. "You are harder on me than Metternich," he said to his envoy. "You want to impose conditions on me that not even my

enemies suggest. Your ideas are ridiculous. You want me to take down my own breeches to get a hiding! It is too much! Where did you get these fine ideas from? I will not refuse any reasonable condition to obtain peace, but do not propose anything shameful! Remember you are a Frenchman!" Caulaincourt held his ground, however, and the Emperor ended by marching off into his study and slamming the door behind him. For several days he kept up this petulant behaviour, but at last he admitted Caulaincourt to an audience and gave him a free hand to do what he thought necessary in order to obtain peace.

The Congress had been in session some days when Metternich handed the French envoy the Austrian terms:—dissolution of the Duchy of Warsaw, re-establishment of Hamburg and Lubeck as free towns, renunciation of the protectorship of the Confederation of the Rhine, reconstruction of Prussia, cession of Illyria to Austria, and reciprocal guarantees. Harsh as the conditions were, Caulaincourt besought the Emperor to agree to them. But Napoleon left his letter unanswered some hours and by the time Caulaincourt got his reply it was too late. During the night of August 10-11 the Russians and Prussians announced that negotiations were at an end, and Austria declared war. Caulaincourt made an ineffectual attempt to appeal personally to the Tsar and when this failed went to Görlitz, where he joined the Emperor on August 18.

For the next few months Caulaincourt accompanied Napoleon in the dual capacity of Master of the Horse and Grand Marshal. At Eilenburg, on October 9, he acted as interpreter between the Emperor and the Saxons who were about to desert. He was at Napoleon's side at Leipzig, and on November 7 went back with him to Saint Cloud.

For some time Napoleon had been urging Caulaincourt to accept the portfolio of Foreign Affairs; no sooner were they back in Paris than he renewed his invitation and exerted pressure through some of the other ministers, for Talleyrand was the more ready to see another in his own place in that he himself realized that Napoleon was finished, and with him the whole Imperial system. At last Caulaincourt yielded; the

decree appointing him to the post was signed on November 20, and he was sworn in that same evening.

He took office in tragic circumstances. The Allies were in France and determined that in no circumstances, sacrifices or no sacrifices, was France to be given peace. Overshadowed by this dismal cloud the new minister set out to do the impossible. He wrote to Metternich saying that His Majesty was prepared to agree that France should be limited by the Alps, the Rhine and the Pyrenees. Metternich answered coldly that he would have to consult his Allies. There was no mistaking the tone of this reply. Caulaincourt understood that the moderate terms in which it was expressed "had no other aim than to engender a false sense of security." Yet he remained obstinately attached to his own hopes for a peaceful solution and persuaded Napoleon to let him go to Allied headquarters and negotiate in person. He left Paris on January 5, 1814, but it was not until the 20th that he received a letter from Metternich informing him that the Congress would be held at Châtilion-sur-Seine, whither he was invited to repair. He started at once and crossed the enemy lines under an escort on the 21st, reaching headquarters that same evening at eleven o'clock.

For a whole week he waited there, fretting at the inaction and increasingly irritated by the absence of any responsible representative of the Allied sovereigns. On the 29th Metternich condescended to let him know that the Congress would open on February 3. On that date the plenipotentiaries began to arrive—Stadion from Austria; Razumowsky from Russia; Castlereagh from England. Razumowsky made no attempt to hide his dislike of Caulaincourt. "I never see him but what I see the ghost of the Duke of Enghien standing beside him," he said. He reiterated his opinion that all Europe was behind the Allies, until at last Caulaincourt picked him up with the caustic remark, "I am quite aware of that, Monsieur. On this occasion France has the honour to be alone!" The Russian was no favourite with his colleagues, and this reply was greeted with covert but delighted smiles. That evening Caulaincourt entertained all the plenipoten-

tiaries at a sumptuous repast. "He was determined," said de Montbas, "to be the first to give a reception in order to show the foreigners that he was in his own country, though it might happen to be territory occupied by enemies."

At the second meeting, on February 7, the Allies proposed to limit France to her frontier before the Revolution—the natural frontiers of Rhine and mountains had been abandoned. Caulaincourt was staggered. "He seemed," wrote Stadion, "like a man overwhelmed with misfortune, desiring only the end of the war, no matter what that end might be." Three days later there was a sensation. The Tsar demanded that negotiations should be suspended. On the 17th the Congress met again, with the old terms—frontiers of 1792, evacuation of all conquered territory including Antwerp. Discussions went on, with proposal and counterproposal, until March 10, when Caulaincourt handed the Allies a written agreement to give up all conquered territory except Lucca and Neuchâtel. No specific mention was made of Belgium. Three days later the Allies rejected this and abruptly declared that the Congress was at an end. On the 20th Caulaincourt, having simply left cards on the plenipotentiaries and paid no formal calls, started for Paris. He joined Napoleon at Saint-Dizier during the night of the 23-24th.

Caulaincourt's account of the Congress, given in the *Memoirs*, explains at length his own views on what took place. It will be seen there, too, how he was hampered by the Emperor's failure to send him instructions. But the plain fact is, the Allies had no intention whatever of coming to terms with Napoleon. History can afford few examples of a diplomat placed in so distressing a situation as that of Caulaincourt at Châtillon. Isolated, in an enemy camp, without support from his sovereign, his hands tied, furnished with powers that were withheld as soon as granted, his was an impossible task. He expressed something of his trouble to the Austrian secretary, Floret: "I have to be negotiating with two parties at the same time, with you and with the Emperor. It is far from simple!"

He tells, too, the story of the days of agony both before and

after Napoleon's return to Fontainebleau. Throughout that harassing time Caulaincourt stands out as a model of probity and loyalty. He had more to fear than anyone else from the return of the Bourbons, for the death of Enghien was ever in their minds and they still saddled him with the responsibility for it. More than any other it was Caulaincourt whose interest lay in undergoing one of those sudden conversions that induced many a hero of those days to change his faith. Such an idea never so much as crossed his mind. In the midst of the treachery and meanness of those around him, faced with the hostility of the Allies—masked by Alexander under a guise of friendliness but open and unashamed in the case of Metternich—an object of jealousy and suspicion to the few Frenchmen on his staff, Caulaincourt never swerved an inch from the line he had laid down for himself, never faltered in the defence of his beaten and discredited master. With most temptation to desert him, he remained the Emperor's most faithful servant to the last.

With Napoleon's farewell at Fontainebleau Caulaincourt's duties came to an end. His Majesty's parting gift was permission to marry Madame de Canisy.

Caulaincourt's position was very delicate. He had not sent in his adhesion to the Royal Government until after Napoleon's abdication, and neither Louis XVIII nor the Count of Artois looked on him with favour. According to Underwood, when the Duke of Vicenza presented himself at the Tuilleries to pay his respects to the Count, the latter accosted him as he entered the room, with the words: "Monsieur de Caulaincourt, you have been accused of having been accessory to a frightful crime. I hope you are able to clear yourself. Until you do so it will be impossible for me to receive you!"

Caulaincourt complained of this outrageous behaviour to the Tsar, who took it upon himself to put things right. He asked Monsieur, as the Duke was now styled, to dine with him, and Caulaincourt was among others invited. The dinner passed off in a frigid silence; Monsieur considered that he had been insulted, and left the table before the meal was finished; the rest were dumbfounded; the Tsar furious.

Eventually Pozzo di Borgo managed to pacify Monsieur and Caulaincourt was duly received; but he had the good sense never to call upon him again. With less success the Tsar intervened when Louis XVIII summoned the Senate and excluded Caulaincourt. Pozzo di Borgo spent two hours pleading his cause with the King himself, but Louis was immovable. Yet a creature like Fouché was fawned upon!

Unoccupied for the first time in his life, Caulaincourt now divided his time between Paris and his own estate in Picardy. The police kept a sharp eye on him; Beugnot, whose son had married Caulaincourt's niece, reported all his movements to the King. If he so much as went to dinner with his mother in Auteuil it was passed on to the royal ears and there was much portentous wagging of heads. On February 13 his eldest son was born.

Two months later came the astounding news of Napoleon's landing at Cannes and march on Paris. At the first rumour Caulaincourt, who was not sure whether his name was still on the list of Bonapartists to be arrested in such an emergency, went into hiding in the house of one of his old cooks.

No one knew better than he the risks and disasters likely to follow on Napoleon's escape from Elba, but the Master of the Horse and Imperial counsellor did not hesitate. On March 20 he set out with other orderly officers to join the Emperor. They met him at Essonnes, where Napoleon embraced them all and took Caulaincourt into his own carriage.

Immediately on reaching the Tuileries Napoleon summoned his old cabinet. Caulaincourt had already refused to take the Foreign Ministry and he now repeated his refusal. But Hortense, Mollé, and others who relied on his sane counsel persuaded him and urged the Emperor to renew his insistence. The following day he sadly consented to accept the burden. His attitude was the more loyal and self-sacrificing in that he profoundly distrusted the future; he was convinced that nothing but disaster faced France; that Europe would never allow herself to be flouted so barefacedly.

Actually there was very little to do at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All relations with foreign cabinets were

broken off automatically when Napoleon reached the Tuileries ; the various ambassadors accredited to Louis XVIII demanded their passports without so much as waiting for orders from their respective governments. Caulaincourt tried in vain to make them stay. The utmost he could do was to keep up certain secret interviews with Baron de Vincent, who represented the Austrian Emperor and was charged with delivering a letter to Marie Louise.

When the foreign ambassadors departed so precipitately from Paris Caulaincourt sent out instructions to all French legations to demand their passports ; at the same time they were to inform the various governments that in no event would France take the initiative in hostilities. But it was kicking against a stone wall ; the despatch-bearers never reached their destinations—they were stopped at the frontiers. Nor were secret agents any more successful. The Treaty of Vienna had rendered futile any attempt at conciliation. As d'Hauteville said : "France lay under an interdict." Talleyrand was not even to be bribed by Napoleon's promise to restore him his property in France if he would return. This refusal may have been dictated by high principles, but it chanced to coincide with a promise by the Allied powers of a very large sum of money, which Talleyrand had accepted.

But all these underhand intrigues and counter-intrigues, which were the delight of Fouché and his kind, could lead to nothing. As Pasquier remarked : "The situation was one of those that can only be cleared up on the battlefield." Such illusions as Caulaincourt may yet have entertained were dispelled by Bautiagine, who, in response to a letter Hortense had sent to the Tsar shortly after Napoleon's return, wrote, "neither peace nor truce ; no more reconciliations with that man."

Caulaincourt took advantage of his leisure to see the Emperor as often as possible and inculcate counsels of prudence and moderation. He also put together his papers on the Congress of Châtillon and notes on the defection of Murat, King of Naples. It was at this time that he had a delicate and unpleasant task put upon him. Méneval, the Emperor's former secretary and now on duty with the young King of

Rome, had written to reveal the state of affairs in Vienna. "The truth ought to be told, about the Empress [Marie Louise]," he says. "Her sentiments towards the Emperor are the same as those of her step-mother, her father, her uncles and, I may add—of General Neipperg." The sting of this, of course, lay in the last words. A day or two later more concise particulars came to hand and upon Caulaincourt devolved the painful duty of opening the Emperor's eyes as to Neipperg's relations with the Empress.

On June 2 Caulaincourt was made a Peer of France, which meant no more than that he had a seat in the upper chamber. A few days later he was asking leave to accompany Napoleon to the army in Belgium. There is a note in the Caulaincourt Papers, written by the Emperor himself, explaining why he could not grant this permission. He feared his brothers' underhand dealings and the intrigues of Fouché, who was said to be in league with Lucien. "Everything," the Emperor said, "depends upon the nature of the intrigues that may develop here in Paris. Rest assured, I need loyal men to keep an eye on the plots being hatched here."

The Emperor left Paris on June 12 and Caulaincourt saw him off with a heavy heart. Ligny, Quatre Bras, Waterloo—on the 21st Napoleon was back in Paris, and all was lost. He arrived at the Elysée at eight o'clock in the morning and Caulaincourt was there to receive him, "his censor in prosperity, his friend in adversity."

The news of Waterloo had reached Caulaincourt during the night of the 19th. Some unknown hand left a little note at the door, announcing the complete destruction of the army. Caulaincourt hurried round to Carnot. He, also, had got the news, and the two of them then went to Fouché who, with his usual mournful air, said that he knew nothing, and then that he knew everything.

In a note Caulaincourt gives the following account of his first interview with the Emperor:

*June 21.*—The Emperor alighted at the Elysée. "Well, Caulaincourt, here is a pretty to-do! A battle lost! How

will the country bear this reverse? Will the Chambers back me up?" He was very tired, quite done up. When he got to his study he threw himself on a sofa and went on: "All the materiel is lost. It is a frightful disaster. The day was won. The army had performed prodigies; the enemy was beaten at every point; only the English centre still held. Just as all was over the army was seized with panic. It is inexplicable. . . ." The conversation drifted into further exclamations. "Ney acted like a madman! They had got my cavalry destroyed before I so much as had a chance to employ it. Grouchy did not keep Bülow in check, and did not come up at all."

He asked for a bath. His breathing was distressed and he complained of it. He asked what was being said in Paris, and how they would take the news of what had happened. He sent to ask whether the Duke of Bassano had come yet, and sent for Count Regnault, as well as Prince Joseph. Then he announced his intention of summoning the two Chambers to meet together in an Imperial session, so that he could lay before them the state of affairs and ask them for money. "What will they do?" he asked. He judged that the most prominent members would be against him. I shared this opinion and told him so. He named La Fayette, Flaugergues, Lanjuinais and others.

I showed him clearly my regret that he had left the army and come to Paris, where his position would be more than difficult if he did not abide by the Council's decisions. He encouraged me to go on. "Your presence would have sufficed to rally the troops at Laon, or in any case at Soissons," I told him. "So soon as Your Majesty was no longer with the army, the staff, the generals, the Guard all flocked to Paris." He agreed that this was so, but added that at the time his presence in the field could have served no purpose, and all his staff had agreed that he ought to go to Paris as quickly as he could. "At the moment," he said, "my being with the army could do nothing to stop the fugitives; on the other hand, if the Representatives adopt a hostile attitude when I *am* in Paris, what would they have done

had I been absent ! The necessary decrees have been issued, and the appeal to the nation printed and made ready for circulation. I shall start back this evening or to-morrow." He realized to the full the opposition he was bound to meet with, but making no mention of the Representatives, enlarged on the means he would have at his disposal to win a victory or anyhow to put up a fight, provided the nation answered his appeal. He complained bitterly of having so few guns and small arms. "That is the worst thing of all," he said. His whole manner of conversation was that of a general eager to snatch a victory.

He went to his bath, and the arrival of Regnault and Prince Joseph put an end to his conversation with me. "I must have a couple of hours to myself," he said, "to put my own affairs in order."

After a brief rest Napoleon opened the sitting of the Council and demanded a temporary dictatorship. Lucien supported him; Carnot wanted to make the old appeal "La Patrie en danger!" As for Caulaincourt, he insisted that the final decision rested with the Chambers, whether they would support the Emperor or no. At six o'clock that evening Lucien and Caulaincourt were sent with His Majesty's message to the Chambers, where a stormy scene took place. Lucien reproached them with deserting their Emperor in his hour of need. Upon this, the veteran La Fayette broke out in impassioned words that sealed the doom of the Empire: "What, you dare to reproach us with not having done enough for your brother ! Have you forgotten that the bones of *our* brothers and sons bear witness everywhere to our loyalty ? In the sandy deserts of Africa, on the banks of the Guadaluquer and the Tagus, beside the Vistula and on the icy plains of Russia, during the last ten or twelve years three millions of Frenchmen have perished for the sake of this one man ! For a man who to-day still wishes us to shed our blood fighting against Europe ! We have done enough for him, our duty is to save our country!"

Stunned by this attitude Lucien and Caulaincourt returned

to the Emperor insisting that his only alternatives were to dissolve the Chambers or abdicate. Even this alternative was in doubt, for Caulaincourt and Maret considered that the Chambers had acquired too great an authority to be swept away so summarily.

At the Emperor's *lever* at nine o'clock the next morning His Majesty dismissed everyone but Caulaincourt, Savary, and Lavallette and asked their opinion on the state of affairs. All three urged him to renounce a power that was the occasion of such dissension. The Chambers, they said, were more eager to dethrone him than they were to arm the nation in its own defence. Indeed, shortly afterwards Napoleon was informed that the Chambers gave him an hour in which to decide whether he would abdicate or be deposed. For more than half the allotted time he hesitated, speculating, reckoning, hoping. Caulaincourt and the others were with him, respectfully but firmly tendering advice to which he paid no heed. At last he turned on Fouché with a glance full of hatred and contempt. "Tell them," he said, "that they may rest easy. They shall have their way!" Striding into the adjoining room he dictated his abdication to Lucien and brought it back, duly signed, and gave it to Fouché.

As soon as the abdication was completed Caulaincourt began to grow anxious for the Emperor to get away from Malmaison and make his escape from the country. Among the archives is a note that reads:

After the abdication the Emperor could have gone to the United States or elsewhere if he had so wished. I myself suggested furnishing him with a passport dated some while back available for America, as well as the means of getting to one of the seaports. Indeed, I besought him to go. "You are in a greaty hurry to get rid of me," he said. I replied, "I am only anxious to save you while there is yet time!" "Yes," he rejoined, "I know you are. It was not of you I was thinking. You know very well that I esteem you, but there are many who would be very glad to have me at a distance." I returned to the charge and

dwelt on the danger he was running, owing to the animosity felt by the foreigners. "I have abdicated," he said; "it is for France to protect me!" He realised well enough the danger of the situation in which he was placed, but it was noticeable—and I had already observed this trait in him in similar circumstances—that he was eager to persuade himself that some lucky chance would turn up in his favour. He concluded by remarking, "I will think it over; to-morrow we shall see!"

Then he spoke very kindly about my own affairs, of the risks I might run, of how deeply he regretted not having made an independent fortune for me. "You know that what I have of my own is nothing very considerable," he said; "but I can give you something." I thanked him for his consideration. Then he discussed the possibility of going across to England unexpectedly, of putting himself under the protection of the English public. In such an event, he wondered, could the English Government arrest him? He spoke at length—and on several occasions—on this subject. He thought it would be the simplest thing in the world to live there and be tolerated as a private citizen. I did not feel so certain that the laws of England would protect him, but the idea pleased him and he liked it much better than the notion of going to the United States.

In the meantime the Chambers had decided to entrust the government of the country to a Directory of five—Fouché, Carnot, Grenier, Caulaincourt, and Quinette. These men met at the Tuileries at 11 a.m. on June 23, under the presidency of Fouché and immediately proceeded to appoint plenipotentiaries to negotiate with the enemy. Thereafter they met twice daily, at 11 a.m. and 9 p.m., each member being charged with the work to which he was already accustomed—Carnot with war; Fouché, police; Caulaincourt, foreign affairs. "Though we were all agreed to exclude the Bourbons," writes the last mentioned, "we realized the double impossibility of governing France without a monarchy and of leaving the throne vacant."

But the deliberations of the Directory were actually of little importance. It was Fouché's intrigues that mattered. Whatever the other members may have thought or wished, he had been plotting for the return of the Bourbons from the moment Napoleon set foot in Paris.

On July 7 the Directory was in full session when, about noon, a Prussian orderly presented himself at the door with a message to the President from Blücher. The Prussians were already in the Carrousel! There was no more need to debate! It was time for the Directory to vanish! It had served Fouché's purpose; as President it was his privilege or duty to hand over the reins to the incoming King.

There was one more bit of stage business before the curtain was rung down on the Empire. In the Chambers Fouché moved that in protest against the Prussian invasion (which had been carried out with his own connivance) the government should resign and cease its functions. This, he pointed out, would be a dignified expression of their feelings. His motion was carried with enthusiasm; when the cheering had died down he quietly announced that, in the absence of a government, Louis XVIII was King of France. Never has a whole chamber of representatives been so tricked. Next day's *Moniteur* published the news; it also gazetted the appointment of Fouché as Minister of Police in the new Royal Government, and printed a fulsome article implying that the King had assumed power at the request of the Directory. A note of Caulaincourt's relates his views of the incident:

At nine o'clock in the morning of July 8 I was reading the *Moniteur* when I came across some sort of declaration of adherence on the part of the Directory. I hastened to the Duke of Otranto [Fouché] and began to reproach him bitterly, reminding him of the attitude we had unanimously settled to adopt, of our loyalty and consistent opposition to anything that had to do with the Bourbons.

He agreed with all I said, and observed that he had just read the article himself, which was as new to him as it was to me. It had been written and inserted by M. de Vitrolles

who, in his capacity of secretary to the Council, had full control of the *Moniteur*, whereas he, the Minister [Fouché] had no authority over it whatsoever. I insisted that it was his duty to contradict this article. He rejoined that that would do no good and might even do us a lot of harm. I reproached him for having placed us in this awkward situation by inserting the letter. He swore once again that he had had nothing to do with its publication, and even went so far as to give me to understand that he had not even the authority to insist on a repudiation being inserted in the *Moniteur*. He promised, however, to furnish me with a disavowal of the sentiments contained in the letter, and I was sitting at his desk drafting this document when our other colleagues appeared. He repeated to them what he had said to me. I wrote out a letter containing our complete repudiation of what had appeared in the *Moniteur*. He also wrote a reply as coming from himself personally, which he had copied and handed to me. He promised to do his utmost to ensure that the *Moniteur* inserted it. I appealed to several newspapers, but all of them except the *Glaneur*, an evening paper, refused to have anything to do with the matter. But the next day two other papers inserted our *dementi*.

This incident opened Caulaincourt's eyes to Fouché and his methods. He had been duped—as wiser men than he, from Robespierre to Napoleon, had been duped—by the astutest and most unscrupulous creature ever spawned in the hotbed of politics.

Having taken over the Ministry of Police in the new regime, Fouché offered his old colleagues in the Committee of Government their passports and promised to let them know “if circumstances should arise that would make it expedient for them to disappear.” Caulaincourt did not avail himself of this offer but stayed on in Paris even when Louis returned. Somewhat precariously he relied for protection on the Tsar's friendship. Alexander had been all condescension and affability during the First Restoration, but after the Hundred

Days he came back to Paris in a raging temper, accusing everyone of ingratitude and worse. Nothing was too bad for the Bonapartists. He was deliberately discourteous to Queen Hortense. There was a lot of truth in Louis XVIII's remark that among all the sovereigns and royalties that came to Paris he himself was the only one who was a gentleman. The Tsar simply refused to see Caulaincourt. But he at least intervened when Blücher, wreaking vengeance on Picardy, wanted to seize his château and sell up its contents. A peremptory letter to the King of Prussia ensured Caulaincourt's immunity from German vindictiveness.

One last service Alexander rendered his old friend. When Fouché was charged with the preparation of a list of Bonapartists to be sent into exile, he was careful to see that the names of his old colleagues in the late Directory were not omitted. His friend Caulaincourt was given special prominence, as the late Emperor's Master of Horse and his trusted counsellor. So embarrassingly zealous was Fouché in the preparation of his list that even the King himself felt obliged to cut it down in length. But the deletion of Caulaincourt's name was due to the Tsar. Nesselrode wrote personally to Talleyrand: "You tell us that you are sending a list of persons to be punished for the part they took in Bonaparte's return. I must inform you that the Tsar would be very sorry to find the name of Caulaincourt included. I must ask you, therefore, to use all your influence to see that he is not involved in any sort of proscription or persecution that may be contemplated."

With the definite return of the Bourbons there was nothing left for Caulaincourt to do but efface himself from any sort of public activity. As a preliminary he resigned his commission in the army on August 24, having completed 26 years, 6 months, and 14 days' service, and was granted a pension of 6,000 francs.

His summers were passed at Caulaincourt, which he made into one of the finest estates in Picardy. He built stables so extensive that at one time there were 400 horses in the stalls; he diverted the Omignon to wash the southern walls of the château; he undertook agricultural improvements on a big

scale. In the château itself he amassed a splendid library and a veritable museum of choice furniture. All this has vanished. One day in 1917, a German sapper appeared with a lorry-load of blasting materials. The place had no military significance and was well within the German lines, but the stolid *feldwebel* methodically placed his dynamite and fuses and blew château and village sky-high. Some of the books were later picked out of the ruins, the furniture was completely destroyed; of the château itself only a few stumps and heaps of stones remained to testify to the thoroughness of German spite.

The Bourbons never forgave or forgot Caulaincourt. Though he was living in the most complete retirement they kept him under surveillance. He could not leave his house in Paris for a few minutes' stroll without the news being hastily reported to police headquarters, where zealous prefects and sub-prefects, eager to prove they were not the same men who had been equally zealous for the Emperor, made lengthy dossiers of his doings. Nor was it only the authorities that suspected him of wickedness; the credulous public, then as now, was agape for sensation and eager to gloat over amazing revelations. In a volume entitled *Balzac mis à nu*, edited by Charles Léger, Caulaincourt figures in a story gravely told with a really enchanting simplicity. On June 1, 1815, Berthier, Prince of Neuchâtel, fell from a window in the palace at Bamberg and was killed. So much is matter of history; whether it was accident, suicide, or murder will ever remain matter of speculation. He had steered a middle course, had accepted a peerage from the King and at the same time kept in touch with the Emperor. As a result, both Louis and Napoleon suspected him. But in *Balzac mis à nu* we read: "A mysterious avenger made his way into Berthier's haven of refuge, strangled him and threw the corpse out of the window. Who was this avenger? It has always been supposed that it was Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza, one of Napoleon's stalwarts. A convenient alibi was to hand, probably manufactured for the occasion . . . but many years after Berthier's death the whole incident was still mentioned with bated breath and something akin to horror."

Caulaincourt lived in the secluded society of his own friends and took no heed of the petty annoyances occasioned by spying and tittle-tattle. He was utterly bored by the squabbles over precedence and patronage that made the Bourbon Court like a girls' school. But in 1820 he wrote a letter—published in two newspapers, the *Constitutionnel* and the *Renommé*—protesting against certain misrepresentations of his political motives that appeared in Koch's *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de la campagne de 1814*. In the course of his letter the word "Emperor" occurred three times when referring to Napoleon; a few days later the Procureur of the Crown charged the writer with "a formal attack on the constitutional authority of the King" and an "offence against the person" of Louis XVIII. In vain did Caulaincourt write to Decazes, President of the Council, appealing to common sense. The Law pursued its course, and on February 5 the Civil Tribunal of the Seine referred the case to the Royal Courts of Paris. A week later that court dismissed the action on the grounds that the "unseemly appellation" of Emperor, when applied to the period of the Congress of Châtillon, "did not constitute a formal attack on the constitutional status of the King."

Caulaincourt had never been a healthy man. Rheumatism and the effects of his wounds now began to cause intense suffering, that was only partially mitigated by cures at Plombières. Towards the end of 1825 cancer of the stomach disclosed itself, and in a few weeks he became emaciated and feeble. But notwithstanding his increasing weakness, in February, 1826, he was able to travel to Normandy, to visit his father-in-law, the Marquis de Canisy, who lay on his deathbed. This nobleman's death, following that of the Tsar Alexander, affected Caulaincourt very deeply. He had always liked and had a deep respect for his father-in-law; the Tsar was the last link with great days for himself and France. He sank into a despondency that nothing could dispel. Afflicted bodily and mentally, he went to the cure at Plombières, but became so much worse that his family brought him back to Paris.

On February 17 he took a sudden turn for the worse.

Mgr Quelen, Archbishop of Paris, was summoned to the bedside to administer Extreme Unction; immediately afterwards he began to sink. Throughout the 18th he lay more or less comatose.

"The next morning," says Madame de Villeneuve, his step-daughter, "the pain he was in became so acute that he lay motionless, in a state of utter exhaustion. He scarcely had strength so much as to groan. . . . He asked to be turned on his left side and then uttered a cry that froze us all with consternation. . . . There was something he wanted to say to my mother, who went to his side. He tried to find her but his poor eyes were beyond seeing anything. But he knew she was there by the tears he felt falling on his ice-cold hand. He murmured, 'Adieu' and that was his last word."

It was half an hour after midday on Monday, February 19, 1827, that Armand de Caulaincourt, Duke of Vicenza, died at the age of fifty-four. He was buried in the cemetery of Père Lachaise, within a stone's throw of the other great men of the Empire—the marshals and statesmen who for a brief fifteen years had made the name of France resound throughout the world. His grave is marked by a simple ledger stone, inscribed with the Caulaincourt arms as worn during the Empire: *party per pale sable and or, on the sinister side a savage gules leaning on a club sable and holding on his dexter hand a cock sable, and in chief for Dukes of the Empire, gules sémé of étoiles argent.* Beneath this are engraved his name and full titles, Marquis de Caulaincourt and Duke of Vicenza. His name is on the Arc de Triomphe, and his memory perpetuated by a street and a square in Montmartre.

The Duchess of Vicenza survived her husband for many years, dying in Paris on May 21, 1876, at the age of ninety-one. Their eldest son, after a short diplomatic career, settled in the country. He was one of the first peers summoned to the Senate under the Second Empire, but he never meddled in politics. On his death, in 1896, at the age of eighty-one, the title of Vicenza became extinct; but his eldest daughter's husband, Count Alberic d'Espeuilles, obtained a decree authorizing him to add the name of Caulaincourt-Vicenza to

his own, and his son, born in 1874, took the title of Duke of Vicenza. He was at Caulaincourt when the war of 1914 broke out and was deported to Germany, where ill-treatment ruined his health. On his death, in 1929, the property descended to his only daughter, the wife of Count Gérard de Moustier. She, the great-great-granddaughter of our Caulaincourt, has now rebuilt the château and spent lavishly to restore the estate.

The manuscript of Caulaincourt's *Memoirs* was kept jealously guarded by his son, a copy being deposited in a black trunk that, in 1870, was put in safe keeping in Brussels, though subsequently removed to Paris. Only on two occasions have the *Memoirs* been shown to outsiders. In 1855 Thiers was allowed to consult them, though with such irritating restrictions that they were of no use to him; many years later Albert Vandal was able to study them when preparing his *Napoléon et Alexandre Ier*. It was not until 1913 that at the instance of the *Figaro* the Duke of Vicenza edited his great-grandfather's papers. He was about to publish them when the war broke out, and the Château de Caulaincourt was destroyed. Fortunately the black box was safe, and from it the text was prepared of which the following is a translation. Confirmation of the authenticity of these Papers has since come to light in an interesting way. When the inhabitants came back to the village in 1919 they set about clearing up some of the confusion caused by the blowing up of the château. They found papers, books, odds and ends of all sorts littered over the meadows. On one pile were thrown such books from the library as survived. In the other heap were collected bits of furniture, ironwork, broken statuary, and so on. One day, years later, the architect engaged to build the new château noticed in this latter heap a tin box, full of yellow papers. Half peeled away from the lid was a faded label, with the words "Monsieur le duc de Vicence." A workman had pried into it, but finding nothing to his taste had thrown it aside. When opened by M. Jean Hanoteau in the presence of the family, this box was found to contain in Caulaincourt's handwriting a copy of the *Memoirs*.

## CHAPTER I

### *The St. Petersburg Embassy*

THE events in Europe between 1807 and 1812 had so great an influence on those which followed later, by placing the balance of Europe's destinies into the hands of Russia, that I have felt it would be valuable to preserve the notes which I made regarding various circumstances of those years.

In writing them my sole motive was to keep an account of my life, my impressions, and my conduct. Since then I have come to regard them as indispensable material for the completion of the official part of my correspondence as Ambassador, and even, it may well be, for the history of that great epoch. For in that history everything connected with Russia is bound to be important, as that country was at the time second only to France in the affairs of the world.

My aim will be fulfilled if my notes help also to formulate opinion on the character and the political views of the Emperor Napoleon.

His words, his judgments and reflections, I believe, should form the best possible instruction for his son,<sup>1</sup> and offer the only explanation worthy of that great man which can be given to the public regarding the events which they judge and criticize without first-hand knowledge of them, and which men nearly always view with the hostility and injustice meted out to repay the great services of those whom fortune has deserted.

Admittedly, it will often be observed that the Emperor's energetic expressions have escaped my memory; but those who saw him at close quarters will find, I trust, his real thought, and at all times the certainty of my good faith.

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Vicenza intended to dedicate his memoirs to the Duke of Reichstadt.

The memorialist's style doubtless falls far beneath such a subject; but the reader's indulgence is deserved by the intention of the man who, in his view, is preserving, with these memories of great happenings, precious material for history. I have been so chary of seeming a flatterer, and my opinion inclined me so strongly to condemn the course of politics and the enterprises of this period, that what then seemed to me impartiality now strikes me as a frequently severe censure rather than the account of a friendly narrator. But I frankly offer my impressions just as I received them at the time, preferring to be blamed rather than to be under the suspicion of having altered what I wrote at the time of these events.

My notes were made everywhere, at my desk and in camp, every day and at all times of day; they are the work of every moment. I have touched up nothing and disguised nothing, because although there were moments when the man showed himself, it was the demigod whom one recognized most often. More than once the thought occurred to me that this journal, written under the very eyes of the Emperor, might fall into his hands; but that reflection did not check my pen. This fact is an answer to those who have claimed that men could neither think nor speak nor write under his reign, and that the truth made him an irreconcilable enemy. No doubt the truth chilled his goodwill, but his strong and lofty character raised him above all criticisms made in good faith. I was confident that, as my notes were only the exact record of what I had said to him, they would seem to him injurious only if I published them as an attack on his policy and his fame.

This journal includes certain details previous to the date of my ambassadorship, collected subsequently to the period when each event was proceeding. They may not all be genuinely interesting, but they have at least the merit of accuracy. Some of them, in my view, are indispensable for the explanation of various circumstances of my public career.

In the lives of men entrusted with public affairs, as in

the progress of events, everything is closely linked up and connected with history. Subsidiary details are necessary because they often explain the circumstances which have brought about certain events. I am bound therefore to speak about myself. As the Congress of Erfurt was dovetailed into my ambassadorship, I have felt that it formed an essential part of my mission. The notes which I made with scrupulous accuracy from the time of the Emperor's arrival in Dresden in 1812 until his return to Paris after the Russian campaign have likewise seemed to me the essential completion of this first part.

If these pages should some day be read and severity imputed to me, I hope that allowance will be made for the happenings under the influence of which they were penned.

Many things, on the other hand, must be cut out, for although I have striven for accuracy and truth, my first resolve has been to injure no man.

Having written down all that the Emperor said to me just as if he had been dictating to me, it will be understood that this journal is but a sketch, and that I have reserved to myself the retention of only such condemnation as will be sternly demanded by historical truth, and will accordingly be indispensable in justifying eulogies.

At the time of Tilsit<sup>1</sup> the Emperor wished to appoint me as Ambassador to Russia. It was on my second refusal, at Königsberg,<sup>2</sup> that General Savary was despatched to Petersburg to take charge, pending the choice of an Ambassador.<sup>3</sup>

At that time I was anxious to find an opportunity of leaving

<sup>1</sup> June–July 1807.

<sup>2</sup> The Emperor resided at Königsberg from 10th–13th July, 1807.

<sup>3</sup> Savary was appointed to this mission on July 13th (Napoleon to Savary, Königsberg, July 13, 1807; *Correspondance de Napoléon I, 1800–1802*), and left at once for Petersburg where he arrived on July 23rd. Cf. *Mémoires du Duc de Rovigo*, II, 259, and Albert Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, I, 115.

the service and marrying.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor, thinking that I should be easier to persuade on my return to Paris, after having seen my friends, whom he believed to be the cause of my refusal, spoke to me on several occasions of this ambassadorship, but without altering my determination. Not even from General Duroc, whom the Emperor sent to persuade me, did I conceal my desire to enjoy some rest and to leave the service. Duroc went so far as to tell me that His Majesty demanded my acceptance of the embassy, if only for six months; that this was the only way by which my projected matrimonial affairs could be arranged; that my absence would smooth everything over; that the Emperor would give his consent, and everything would be agreeably settled during my absence in Petersburg. My plans for retirement seemed to him inadmissible so long as war continued. The Emperor, he told me, would make it an excuse for breaking that which I was concerned to conciliate. All that I could obtain from Duroc's loyal kindness was, that he would seize any favourable opportunity of mentioning my matrimonial plans, which were made difficult to carry out by my refusal to proceed to Petersburg.

In the end the Emperor had apparently given up the idea of appointing me to this post, for a few months later he sent as Ambassador the Comte de La Forest.<sup>2</sup> His arrangements were made; he was indeed just on the point of leaving for Petersburg in October, at the same time as M. Tolstoy, the

<sup>1</sup> He proposed to marry Mme de Canisy. From this period can be dated the sentiments inspired in M. de Caulaincourt by the beautiful Mme de Canisy. Married at an early age to her cousin, at that time Master of the Horse to the Emperor, and neglected by him, she attracted the eyes of all the Court by her dazzling beauty. M. de Caulaincourt fell passionately in love with her, and this attachment, more or less shared for some years, turned him to thoughts of marriage. . . . When the return of the King condemned M. de Caulaincourt, the Duke of Vicenza, to a life of retirement, she wished to share his misfortunes and married him. *Mémoires de Mme de Rémusat*, II, 267.

<sup>2</sup> Antoine René Charles Mathurin de La Forest (1756-1846) had been secretary of the French delegation at Luneville, minister at Munich, at Ratisbon and at Berlin (August 1 to October 6,

Russian Ambassador, was expected in Paris,<sup>1</sup> when the Emperor suddenly changed all his plans and reverted to his first idea, on the arrival at Fontainebleau of M. Eugène de Montesquiou, the orderly officer bringing despatches from General Savary, with whom he had spent a couple of months.<sup>2</sup>

"Savary is anxious to remain at Petersburg," he said to me, "but he is not the man for me there. He is useful to me here! He advises me that a military man is wanted, someone who can attend parades, a man whose age, manners, tastes and openness can win the favour of the Tsar Alexander, and whose diplomatic exterior does not undermine his confidence. Montesquiou tells me the same thing; I need there a man of good birth, whose manners, bearing and attentiveness to women and society are pleasing to the Court.<sup>3</sup> Montesquiou spoke to me frankly about this. La Forest's diplomatic gravity will scare the Tsar and be displeasing to the Court.<sup>4</sup> Alexander has retained kindly feelings towards you. You will be able to accompany him everywhere. You will be a general or an aide-de-camp when necessary, an ambassador

1806). In August 1807 he was appointed Ambassador at Petersburg. M. Geoffroy de Grandmaison, in the note inserted over the *Correspondance du Comte de La Forest*, I, xxv, says that he declined the mission. In March 1808 La Forest was appointed Ambassador at Madrid, and kept the post until May 1813. He was Minister of Foreign Affairs from April 3 to May 12, 1814, and a State Minister and member of the Privy Council in 1825.

<sup>1</sup> In August 1807 Alexander appointed as his representative in Paris Count Peter Tolstoy, lieutenant-general, brother of the Grand Marshal.

<sup>2</sup> Rodrigue Charles Eugène de Montesquiou-Fezensac, born in Paris on August 15, 1782, was later colonel of the 13th Chasseurs and Chamberlain to the Empress.

<sup>3</sup> See Albert Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, I, 141, regarding the reasons which actuated the selection of Caulaincourt. The Emperor's words here reported confirm what Vandal says.

<sup>4</sup> In the postscript to his letter to Savary of November 1st (*Correspondance*, 13318) Napoleon said: "I am definitely sending Caulaincourt as Ambassador Extraordinary to Russia. . . . I was originally going to send La Forest, but feared that he was too old, and that it might be thought he was not sufficiently trusted by me, which is of primary importance."

when that is called for. The affairs of the world centre there. . . . Universal peace depends on Petersburg. You must go."

Without giving me time to say a word, he entered into countless details about the Tsar Alexander, about Russia, about his information from General Savary,<sup>1</sup> and, without waiting for any reply, which he doubtless thought would certainly be no more affirmative than in the past, he urged on his horse, which he did not pull up until he was back in the centre of his party and was sure that I could not answer him. At the end of the hunt the Emperor again spoke about Russia, and mentioned what he called my absurd repugnance for affairs, talking about the services which could be rendered to France at that Court, the necessity of having there a man at once upright, devoid of all intriguing spirit, and a friend of peace.

"The maintenance of European peace," he said, "depends on it. It is the fair Mme de C——<sup>2</sup> who keeps you in Paris. But your affairs, as you wish to marry, will be settled better at a distance than near at hand."

I voiced a few arguments, the best I could think of, to lead his choice in other directions, but he seemed not to listen. On returning to the Palace, the Emperor told me to wait in his study immediately after his dinner, and to go in by the secretaries' entrance. An hour's conversation was devoted to proving that I owed my services to my country and my sovereign, and that I could not decline a mission which would not only be useful to them but honourable to myself. The Emperor told me that I would remain there only for one year, that my marriage arrangements would be settled during that time, and that on my return I should do as I pleased.

I marvelled at the patience, and, I may say, the kindness of the Emperor, for the obstinacy of my refusals and the obstructiveness of my "no's," with no good reason behind them were such as might have exasperated him extremely.

<sup>1</sup> Montesquiou had brought Napoleon a letter and a report from Savary, dated October 9th.

<sup>2</sup> Mme de Canisy.

Early next morning he summoned me, and once again lectured me with the object of securing my consent. He left me in a genial mood and I thought my case was won, but an hour later Duroc came in to tell me that the Emperor insisted on my acceptance. I stood firm, and was the more inclined to think that the Emperor would look elsewhere as I had already noticed some irritation in him the previous evening. In the Emperor's apartments, when the Court assembled in the evening, he pointedly refrained from speaking to me, but my hopes were of short duration.

At the levee next day [November 2, 1807], without having said a word to me on entering beforehand, the Emperor announced his decision on the Petersburg embassy. As he was to leave within four days' time for Venice and Italy, this procedure enabled me to gauge the possible force of fresh representations on my part. I resigned myself.

An hour later the Emperor sent for me; his first words were: "Monsieur l'Ambassadeur. . . ." And then, "You're a stubborn fellow," he said, jokingly, and pinching my ear. After repeating his remarks in previous conversations, he bade me give very detailed orders for the arrangements of his forthcoming journey, and to see to it that the functions which I exercised as Master of the Horse should not suffer through my absence. He asked for my promise to set off for Petersburg six days after his departure, and ordered me to remain at Fontainebleau until he himself left, so that we could thoroughly discuss matters.

At this moment M. Tolstoy arrived.<sup>1</sup> He was petted and caressed, but the first interchange of views showed the Emperor that this was not a man upon whom cajolery would have effect; he told me that he was imbued with prepossessions, even with many prejudices, but nevertheless had rectitude and a certain openness. He also complained to me that he had not wit enough to grasp and judge certain questions, that

<sup>1</sup> Count Peter Tolstoy handed his credentials to the Emperor at Fontainebleau on November 6th, and was received in private audience next day, when he handed to Napoleon a personal letter from Alexander (*Correspondance*, 11339).

he was of a suspicious temper, and that this disposition of mind made him unsuitable for public affairs.<sup>1</sup> The truth is that his too obvious suspiciousness made him appear difficult to persuade. He had taken quite literally all the speeches and promises made at Tilsit. Public affairs were not his province, and he was ill at ease in his position and embarrassed at being on the great stage where he had to make his bow.<sup>2</sup> Later events, and the events of that time in Spain, may also have given food for thought to the rulers in Petersburg and their ambassador.

At Tilsit the Emperor Napoleon had gone far to meet the ideas of the Tsar Alexander. He had gone further in words and aspirations than he was willing to go in policy, and was vexed at finding an extremely positive man who accepted literally all that had been repeated to him, and who was, as he said, all of a piece.

"This M. Tolstoy," the Emperor further remarked to me, "has all the notions of the Faubourg Saint-Germain and all the prepossessions of the old Court of Petersburg before Tilsit. He sees only the ambition of France, and at heart he deplores the change in the Russian political system, and especially its alteration in regard to England. He may be a very gallant fellow, but his stupidity makes me regret Markov.<sup>3</sup> One could talk with Markov; he understood questions of policy. This man is startled by everything."

The Emperor was not in error about the prepossessions of M. Tolstoy.

The Emperor set off for Italy,<sup>3</sup> and I left for Russia im-

<sup>1</sup> "A soldier of the days of the Empress Catherine II, an able general, but no diplomat, an avowed foe to the Franco-Russian alliance, and a man of little perspicacity and mediocre abilities." —Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhaclovitch, *Rélations*, I, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Count Arcadius Ivanovitch Markov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was sent to Paris under Catherine II and then dismissed by Paul I. Alexander sent him back to represent Russia under the Consulate in 1802; in that capacity he signed the Franco-Russian peace, but was recalled, in deference to Bonaparte's complaints, at the end of 1803.

<sup>3</sup> At 6 a.m. on November 16, 1807.

mediately after his departure.<sup>1</sup> I could make no preparations. I was obliged to fall back on men of business, and paid dearly for their aid. On my return, M. D—, to whom I had entrusted my interests, had robbed me disgracefully. I had to make a second payment of 100,000 francs for silver, and many accounts which he did not settle although he had received the money for them. He cost me 200,000 francs.

After a year's stay at Petersburg, I accompanied the Tsar Alexander to Erfurt, hoping, and even convinced, that I should not be returning to Russia.<sup>2</sup> During my sojourn at Erfurt the Emperor Napoleon frequently discussed affairs with me, but broke off the conversation as soon as I mentioned my return to Paris. Once, finding me more insistent, he said: "We shall arrange that when the Congress is over."

As that time approached, Duroc was again sent to make me listen to reason on the need for my return to Petersburg. In vain did I urge the pledge given to me that I should be left there for only one year.

The Emperor allowed me to go on hoping till the last day. Then, one morning, he told me that I must choose between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and my embassy; that I had been useful as ambassador, *that I must remain there*; that in the present state of Europe, *the maintenance of relations with Russia* was the *safeguard of peace, and this depended on me*, because I was acceptable to the Tsar Alexander; that the latter monarch had told him so; that he could see how I had inspired confidence in him and that I could leave him only if I were to take over the Ministry; that this was the only means of preserving the existing state of good relations; that Austria was announcing hostile intentions; that the attitude of the Petersburg government was the sole arbiter of peace during his absence in Spain; that to this end there must be no conceivable doubt as to his intentions, nor as to the maintenance of the alliance, and so that Europe must without fail believe in a perfect state of accord; and finally that he desired my return to Petersburg,

<sup>1</sup> Caulaincourt reached Petersburg on December 5-17, 1807.

<sup>2</sup> Caulaincourt left Petersburg on September 11, 1808, and reached Erfurt on September 24th.

where I should be all the more useful to him as M. Rumiantsof<sup>1</sup> was to be in Paris over the English negotiation, and if a settlement could be agreed upon with that government, it was important that he should have beside Tsar Alexander a man known to the latter and already fully acquainted with the course of events.

From the beginning of the interview the Emperor complained of the Tsar Alexander's failure to see eye to eye with him in his anti-Austrian views. He kept on telling me that the Tsar had changed, that he seemed to have some ~~mental~~ reservation, for the only means of preventing Austria from making war, and from again compromising himself was to show decisiveness and act against her by common accord. The first concern, he urged, was to use every means to lend colour to the alliance for the securing of this result; Austria's attitude was fostering England's hopes of a new coalition and preventing the establishment of peace, and the longer the period of waiting, the longer would be the condition of distress caused by the war with England; Austria was England's last hope, and we must bare our teeth at her.

Conversation on this objective and on the general affairs of Europe was renewed on several occasions. Far from being upset by my observations, opposed though they were to the ideas which he wished to see prevail and with which he sought to imbue me, the Emperor spurred me on to talk with frankness. I frequently pointed out to him that his insistence on the offensive attitude which he wanted Russia to assume against Austria, might cause a fear that he was resolved to avenge himself on that Power before sending his troops into Spain, and that this opinion, and even the suspicion of it, must be damaging to his policies, especially as the Tsar Alexander seemed to me to be making peaceful relations with Austria his primary concern.

<sup>1</sup> Count Nicholas Rumiantsof had been Russian Foreign Minister since September, 1807. By Article 2 of the Convention of Erfurt it was agreed by Russia and France to appoint plenipotentiaries to negotiate peace with England, and to send them with that object in view to the continental city which England might appoint.

I added that it was known from experience that, His Majesty being always inclined to throw down the glove, he would be no less inclined to pick it up, and that there was even more fear of his secret views and his ambition than of a sudden stroke made by Austria; in fine, that Russia believed herself to be serving the cause of a secure peace by an attitude of extreme reserve, which might indeed damage rather than help the maintenance of that peace if Austria were so foolish as to wish to make war alone; that Russia, in view of the present state of Prussia, had good reason to suspect our influence and even to fear Austria.

I further added that our insistence was calculated to heighten this distrust, and that if he wished to keep troops in Germany and to retain the strongholds of the Oder, I would strongly urge him not to revert too much to this question, as Austria's anxiety might win over Russia, however definite she might then be in the alliance to force England to peace, an objective which attracted his whole attention as a means of reaching a stable peace for all. I also argued that to force England to make peace had been what was termed the underlying idea of Tilsit; that this noble aim was the basis of the alliance, and that the whole of the Tsar Alexander's policy was openly directed towards achieving and attaining it as soon as possible, as all the sacrifices which he had demanded from his nation had been made with that end in view; that a new war with Austria could not be put forward in the light of a speedier means to that end, for the mere appearance of such a war might chill enthusiasm and damage the alliance. I urged him, therefore, to ponder these considerations, if he was determined in the matter, and finally to reflect that nothing could be hoped for from pressing a formidable course upon Russia, as that Power would see in her agreement with ourselves against Austria, in threats, and above all in intervention, a means for His Majesty to embark upon that war and to overthrow Austria, a consequence which she dreaded above anything else.

These considerations, repeated in several conversations, led me to discuss affairs in Spain and the effect which they had produced.

The Emperor answered :

"No doubt there has been there a convergence of vexatious, even unpleasant, circumstances. But what does that matter to the Russians? They have not been over-particular about the methods of partition and subjection in Poland. This is keeping me busy far away from themselves; that is just what they need; and so they're delighted.

"In any case, all the intrigues of the princes of Spain have been independent of my own will; I intervened in their affairs only when the King and his son arrived at Bayonne for mutual denunciations. I did not force Charles IV to come there; he abdicated of his own free will. As for Ferdinand, I could not entrust myself to his bad faith, and that of his counsellors, once I had seen them at close quarters. Was I wrong? Time will show. To act differently would have been to remove the Pyrenees; France, and history, would have blamed me, and rightly so. After all, why is Europe so much upset? Did not France, England and Holland partition Spain in the lifetime of Don Carlos?<sup>1</sup> And did that first experiment in modern diplomacy find such bitter critics? Did the odium of that partition, which must have descended on a first example, prevent others of the same kind? Did not Poland undergo this stern treatment? Were the Poles summoned, like the Junta of Bayonne, to provide a constitution and choose a sovereign for the country? When Louis XIV later procured for the House of Bourbon the heritage of Charles V from one of that monarch's heirs, what an outcry! It was, indeed, far more surprising! After fighting for ten years, the question was settled by a battle.<sup>2</sup> This affair will not drag on so long.

"In politics everything is built and based upon the interest of peoples, on the need of public peace, on the requisite balance of States. No doubt everyone will explain these big words in his own way; but who can argue that I did not act in the interest of France, and even in that of Spain? They may

<sup>1</sup> Treaty of The Hague, October 11, 1698.

<sup>2</sup> Denain, July 24, 1712.

allege that, in politics, only a fool lacks good reasons? But in this case the fools, like the clever ones who are honest, will be forced to agree that I did what was called for, in the position forced upon that unhappy country by the intrigues of the Court of Madrid."

I also spoke to the Emperor of the system he was following, his position in Germany, his conduct towards Prussia, the occupation of the Oder strongholds, and finally of the development which the French system, since Tilsit, had assumed in Germany. I told him frankly that each State believed herself threatened, that fear kept the smaller States silent, but that Austria, in point of fact, was taking up arms only because of the fear which she, like everybody, felt. The diversion offered by Spanish affairs doubtless seemed to her to offer the only, and the last, movement left for a defence of her independence, and the war which she threatened could only be a war of desperation, given her actual condition and her isolation after so many defeats.

"What is my aim believed to be, then?" the Emperor asked me.—"To rule single-handed," I replied.—"But France is large enough! What can I want? Haven't I enough with my Spanish affairs, with the war against England?"—"Doubtless there would be more than enough to occupy any man except Your Majesty. But the presence of your armies in Germany, your resolve to hold the positions on the Oder—everything leads people to believe, as I admit to Your Majesty I am myself convinced, that you have other projects and that your ambition is not satisfied."

The Emperor joked about the ambition attributed to him. He sought to connect this notion with the Spanish war, which he was at pains to justify. He spoke of the follies of the King of Spain, and the infamous conduct of the Prince of the Asturias, of the previous war with Austria, and of the war with which that Power was at the moment threatening him, as of wars made against his defending person which, indeed, it had really been in his own interest to try to avoid. He said that he had been drawn despite himself into the course which Spanish affairs had taken. He deplored what he called the

stupidity of the Grand Duke of Berg;<sup>1</sup> it could only be compared, he said, to that of the King of Spain, of the Prince of the Asturias, and of their counsellors. He agreed that it was a troublesome affair, but added that its prevention had not depended on himself.

"From a simple matter which time would have settled, there has emerged one which complicates all other ~~questions~~, and thwarts me much more than is thought. I could not make allowance in my calculations for all the outcome of the feebleness, stupidity, cowardice and bad faith of these Spanish princes."

He presented in a reassuring light the departure of the troops who were being withdrawn from Germany. "People are pleased," I replied, "to see their numbers lessened, but there still remain too many for that withdrawal to be a proof that Your Majesty has changed his system. They do not take into account things dictated by necessity. . . ."

This consideration made him laugh. He reverted more than once to Spanish affairs, to the hostility of Austria, to the ambition which, he said, made that power come forward at that particular moment because she believed him to be in difficulties on account of the Spanish insurrection.

"At one moment," he said to me, "I thought that the Emperor of Austria would turn up here. Even in his own interests, that would have been his best possible course of action. Mutual explanation could have been made. . . ."

I pointed out that it was said that the Emperor of Austria had not been invited to the interview, of which he had only learned through the gazette.

"What does that matter, when one has determination and knows one's own will? But they don't know that in Vienna! Their government only wants to cause anxiety, and the result is armaments, threats, expenditure of money, bad temper, and in the end—gunfire. No doubt, I am just as pleased that the Emperor of Austria should have stayed at home, for I should have had two opponents to argue with here instead of one;

<sup>1</sup> Murat, Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom of Spain since May 2, 1808.

but he did not come because he is making ready for war, and he could not have explained his armaments. It is always embarrassing for a sovereign to tell lies face to face. He chose to leave that task to Baron Vincent, who, in any case, will not have to complain of my indiscreet questions, because I know what to confine myself to.<sup>1</sup> Are you certain," the Emperor asked me, "that Vincent's arrival here is not a concerted step made with Rumiantsof, that there is no arrangement between them, in fact, that it is not an opening for some proposals or projects for Prussia?"

This idea seemed to cause the Emperor much concern. I assured him that his doubts were ill-founded, that the Russians had actually been surprised to see Baron Vincent there, that the governments for the moment were piqued rather than trustful, and that, as regards Prussia, the Russians would assuredly take keen interest in her fate, as was necessitated by their own situation.

"Alexander's primary interest," the Emperor resumed, "is that peace should be made with England. If the Emperor of Austria had come here, his presence would have had the advantage of lending more weight to the steps we shall take with regard to the London government. But, with his own plans, it cannot be suitable for him to undertake pledges against those who, no doubt, will soon be his paymasters. . . ."

I told the Emperor that the abduction of Ferdinand had made such an impression in Europe that, in Vienna as in Petersburg,<sup>2</sup> it had actually been feared that he might play a base trick on the sovereigns who proceeded to Erfurt.

"Bah! Do you believe that?" said the Emperor. "It

<sup>1</sup> Baron Vincent had reached Erfurt on September 28th, bringing affectionate and specious letters from the Emperor of Austria for Napoleon and Alexander. Napoleon received him in audience on that date. "On the day after the first conferences a despatch from General Andréossy, our Ambassador in Vienna, was handed to Napoleon. Following on Baron Vincent's heels, it made it plain that Austria was contradicting by her behaviour the declarations of her representative and was avowing her irreconcilable temper."—A. Vandal: *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, I, 429.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. Vandal: *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, I, 407.

was a different motive that held back the Emperor of Austria from coming. He sent Vincent to sound Alexander's intentions, to make certain whether he was staunch in the alliance, and whether he could be drawn away from it. We must keep an eye on his moves. The Austrians are not yet ready; their coalition is not yet linked up; so they want to gain time—and I too," he went on emphatically, "I too want to gain time. So we are agreed; this will last as long as it can. . . ."

The Emperor's refrain was that, if Alexander were his friend, Russia ought to march frankly by his side and make common cause against Austria, without involving herself with Germany, and still less with Spain.

In his last conversations the Emperor put forward justifications for his views of moderation and of peace for Germany. He even showed much anxiety to soothe Austria, and to find a means of doing so. My reflections, which he smilingly referred to as criticism, led him to remark :

"But what ideas have you? What means would you employ to reassure these good folk who are, as you think, so terrified?"

Frequently the Emperor assumed an air of cordiality which might well have made me think that he had decided to change his system and adopt one of more moderate kind. As he was pressing me this time to speak my mind, and as I have always been ready to make frank avowal of what I believed to be just and in the interest of the Emperor and of my country, I told him that the means I would suggest were to arrange such financial undertakings with Prussia as would make her realize the extent of the sacrifices at the cost of which she would recover her independence and territory, and would guarantee that more would not be asked than had been imposed at Tilsit.

"Withdraw your troops from Germany, Sire," I added. "Keep only one stronghold as a pledge for your revenue, and the world will remain at peace."

I pointed out that Europe was more in need of reassurance than of terrorization; any action of his to check apprehensiveness about his schemes would consolidate his achievements by restoring peace of mind and removing anxiety regarding the

future. This political move would be of greater use to him than an army of 100,000 men and ten strongholds on the Oder, and would consequently leave all his forces at his disposal to cover Spain and put an honourable end to the complications in that country before the insurrection there had become an organized movement. I pointed out to him that these troubles were causing bad effects; the prolonged resistance of the Spaniards was a dangerous example in the existing conditions in Europe. My suggestion, I said, might seem a very great sacrifice, but the eventual results would repay his doing so voluntarily, before circumstances possibly became such as to force such action through necessity.

The Emperor was partly in agreement with the justice of my comments, but he referred to them as a system of weakness. He objected that they would lose the fruit of all the sacrifices already made in order to make England bow, and that it was essential to close every port to the commerce of that Power, so as to compel her recognition of the independence of other flags. I retorted that the armies could be withdrawn and some strongholds evacuated without the removal of customs control; concentration of his strength would increase his power; there would never be any suspicion of weakness attaching to him; and as nobody would have any wish to see him spreading two or three hundred thousand men over Germany, nobody would face that risk for the momentary advantage of resisting the customs system, which it was in his interest to maintain on the coasts.

The Emperor often listened to me with a genial air, but sometimes also with impatience. More than once he told me, though in a joking tone, that I understood nothing of affairs. . . .

“That, Sire, is why I am asking to be replaced.”

The Emperor did not take my retort very well. He turned on his heel and replied peevishly:

“A man’s first duty, Ambassador, is to his country.”

On the following evening Duroc came to see me on the Emperor’s behalf, to notify me again of his desires regarding myself. He reminded me that he had previously wished to

summon me to the Ministry at the time of the organization of the Empire, and recalled what he had been charged to tell me at that period. So, he added, I should not be surprised by the Emperor's present views regarding me; my entry to the Ministry would soothe and satisfy Russian feelings, and bring me back home; and further, the Emperor was giving me the choice of assuming the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or of returning to Petersburg. I declined the Ministry. I recounted my conversations with the Emperor to Duroc, notably that morning's one, and described its conclusion, asking whether he had been told about it. He assured me that he had not; the Emperor had simply complained of my presenting too single a front in my opinions, and had added that, if he was to believe me, Europe would soon be treating him like a small boy.

On the eve of his departure, just when the conference business was about to be definitely concluded,<sup>1</sup> the Emperor again sent for me. The conversation took the same lines as previously. He used all the fascination of his genius, all his available powers of persuasion, to bring me to his way of thinking. He expressed his confidence in me, and told me that I could be of more use to him than anybody else could, that I would reap my reward when the occasion came. To induce me to go to Petersburg he said everything that could possibly appeal to the feelings of a loyal subject. My choice was not in doubt; I believed I could be of service there, and the qualities of the Tsar Alexander had attached me to him.

Hitherto I have spoken only of my conversations with the Emperor, and therefore only of what was pertinent to myself. But I was not unacquainted with what had happened at the Congress of Erfurt, and I should therefore revert to the developments there; but for the reader's proper comprehension, matters should be approached on a wider basis, and the general political situation of each State at this time should first be set forth.

<sup>1</sup> That is, on October 13th, as Napoleon and Alexander left Erfurt on October 14th. The Convention of Erfurt was signed on October 12th.

The Conference of Erfurt, to outward appearance, had one common object—the measures to be concerted to force England to make peace (the outcome of what was called the underlying idea of Tilsit), the desire that the sovereigns should be agreed amongst themselves and meet personally every year; the interview marked a period, as it was the prelude to the meetings of the crowned heads who have ruled Europe since 1814. . . . Is that memory of Tilsit the only one which has survived the great man who conceived it?

So much had happened in Europe since Tilsit, and the interests of the world had, in certain respects, been so much compromised, that everyone who appeared there was obliged to be masking his difficulties, his anxieties, or his secret schemes for the future, as well as bringing his wishes for that general peace which alone could put Europe back on sounder foundations and repair all breaches.

The Spanish troubles, instead of regenerating that country and increasing the Emperor Napoleon's preponderance, as he flattered himself would happen, had resulted only in a variety of difficulties.

Austria, viewing that war and the treatment of the Spanish dynasty as an attack on the independence of all the old-established dynasties, was preparing to take up arms, believing that the subjugation of Spain meant her own ruin. That moment, she felt, was her last chance of safety, and offered therefore a politic and advantageous diversion dictated by the need of her self-preservation. These views, though still only a project, could not escape the vigilance of the Emperor Napoleon, and for the moment embarrassed him.

European, and even French, opinion had greeted the Spanish affairs as a political attack on a feeble, credulous and clumsy ally. The course of events was obscure, and could be explained only in a hostile sense, and blaming voices were joined by those which argued that this new war would mean further delays in making peace with England, the goal of all desires, as this war was the pretext for every sacrifice. This being so, it was important for the Emperor Napoleon to impress public opinion by his complete agreement with Russia,

an agreement which, on the one hand, must be made to impress Austria and induce less hostile feelings in England, and on the other hand appear to the public to be a token of submission to external events. This submission was useful at a moment when discontent was everywhere being fortified by our reverses. Opinion would surely be swung round in the Emperor's favour if Europe could be shown that England was alone in her refusal of peace and was prolonging this hateful system of the extermination of the continental States. To reach this goal, steps must be taken to show from which side refusal came; and to invest these steps with high significance, an interview was necessary.

As affairs in Spain had turned out badly, and the war in that country was not advancing matters, the Emperor, obliged to ransack his coffers, was in a hurry to put an end to it. Forced to raise fresh levies, and even to transfer to Spain the greater portion of his armies in Germany, he could only maintain his influence here by means of the strongholds and such territory as he would continue to occupy there. It was so much in Russia's interest to see the French troops moving further away from her frontiers, and, consequently, to see the friendly security of Prussia evacuated, that this moment made a prolonged occupation of the Prussian strongholds a delicate question to negotiate.<sup>1</sup> Only the Emperor could grant at that moment what circumstances might demand, and even abandon his Spanish projects if these reverses and the example of Austria made Russia hesitate. What ascendancy other than that of his genius, his glory, and his great political schemes could have secured an outcome so contrary to Russian interests? Who could have attempted it without dread of perturbing that cabinet, and even of detaching it from the alliance at a moment when its assistance was so greatly needed? It was under the sway of these wide considerations that the Emperor arrived at Erfurt.

<sup>1</sup> By Article 4 of the Treaty of Tilsit, Napoleon had pledged himself to restore to Prussia the "country towns and territories" designated in the text, "in consideration for H.M. the Emperor of All the Russias."

In going there the Tsar of Russia likewise had more than one aim in view, for his difficulties were several. The journey was a fulfilment of the pledge taken at Tilsit. To a prince of his character, a promise given is ever a duty. Besides, more than one consideration drew him to the meeting. First and foremost was his interest in hastening by any means a peace with England, whose warfare was ruining his internal trade and killing his exchange. He also wished not to be hurried to evacuate the Danubian provinces still occupied by his troops (the Treaty of Tilsit allowed him to occupy them only for a time limited to the peace with the Turks and the evacuation of a part of Prussia by France).<sup>1</sup> The second, concerning him no less closely as it affected the vanity of a nation, and therefore his personal self-respect, was to prevent it being repeated in Moscow that the peace of Tilsit and the alliance had imposed upon Russia nothing but sacrifices. He also desired to obtain the evacuation of some of the fortified points and of the territory of Prussia, a reduction in her tribute and facilities for its payment, and also such arrangements as would enable that Power really to throw off the yoke and recover her full independence, an important question, and one of personal safety, for Russia herself.

Russia was silent concerning affairs in Spain, which the Tsar indeed expounded in his discussions with goodwill rather than irritation as regards his ally, because he was acquainted with all its details. Nor was he displeased that the Emperor's warlike ardours should find vent in the Peninsula. In politics many things are explained and made valid by interest. The interest which England had in wresting that country from our influence and in saving Portugal was in his eyes a powerful instrument for inducing her to make peace. From this point of view the course of events was therefore serving the interests of Russia as well as our own. As peace with England was the sole means of ensuring the peace of the whole world, Russian policy in these circumstances adapted itself admirably, inasmuch as the secret explanation of its meaning was perhaps

<sup>1</sup> Articles 22 and 24 of the peace treaty of July 7, 1807.

less favourable. Such were the views which the Petersburg cabinet brought to Erfurt.

Austria showed all the more irritation at not having been introduced to these plans for a meeting, as she could not take a fresh line on the motive for this silence, and as this quite plausible pretext for discontent served her secret schemes. The Emperor Napoleon had doubtless been little concerned at the non-arrival of the Emperor Francis to take part in the negotiations at Erfurt. He felt that his contact with the monarch from the North would be certain to re-establish relations which a community of wide interests could only have weakened and ought to be instantly linked up again. The interview was kept a secret until the eleventh hour, and Austria did not learn of it until the news was made public; she then hastened to despatch Baron Vincent to Erfurt with a view to sounding the general currents and becoming to some extent aware of the decisions which would be taken. The awkward ill-temper of his cabinet, and the fear of an indiscretion on the part of the Russians, left his position with regard to them one of reserve, which was further encouraged by the reserved attitude adopted by Russia in her desire to keep on friendly terms with ourselves; but his reserve rendered so poor a service to European interests, which both parties ought to have been defending, that it did honour to the loyalty of the Tsar Alexander.

As I said before, the intentions disclosed by Austria for some time past were bound to be, and in fact were, more than suspect to the Emperor Napoleon. The appearance of her envoy seemed to him to conceal an existing agreement with Russia; but he was soon reassured, and this unanticipated incident, which ought to have lent strength to the political language of the Petersburg cabinet, had, as will be seen, quite a contrary effect.

Relations between the Emperors were from the start established on the most friendly basis, without etiquette. They visited one another at all hours, chiefly between three o'clock and dinner, which was a standing engagement at the Emperor Napoleon's headquarters. Frequently they met again in the evening, when there was no theatrical perform-

ance, or afterwards. The meetings also were generally arranged at the Emperor Napoleon's headquarters. They rode, and reviewed garrison troops and certain corps which were leaving for Spain.

The first days were spent by each in taking soundings, in trying to divine or discover the views and projects of the other. The Emperor Napoleon did not find his ally so easy as at Tilsit, complaining that he had become distrustful. The hostile intentions betrayed by Austria changed the character of the negotiations from the start of the congress, and diverted Russia from its purpose; for the Emperor Napoleon, in a hurry to send his forces from Prussia to Spain, became more pressing to ascertain in advance how far he could count on the alliance and on the assistance of Russia against Austria, and became in consequence more pressing that the Tsar should be more threatening in word and behaviour towards that Power, as this, he urged, was the only way of preventing her from taking up arms; and the result of this was that the Russian cabinet, regarding the demonstrations demanded of them as a means of forcing a climax, tended to stand aloof from him. Whence arose lively arguments which held up the progress of other business. For some time everything was subordinated to this question. There were even reproaches uttered, to the effect that these misunderstood gestures of friendship, leaving Austrian threats unpunished, were robbing the alliance of its usefulness and offering England a proof that she could still find allies on the Continent and so avoid the necessity of entering the peace negotiations which were to be proposed to her.

The Tsar was unshakable. Nothing could alter his resolve. He refused to see in the arguments and insistence of his ally anything but a proof of the hostile intentions and schemes of revenge of which he suspected him. The interests of Prussia and other questions had difficulty in receiving attention amidst these serious arguments. Time was passing. No progress was being made. Ministers were unable to advance the progress of matters in which the sovereigns had reserved the control, and even the details, for themselves.

After a week each of them was still testing the ground, trying to discover how far the claims of his adversary extended, without being able completely to penetrate them. They watched each other, hoping that the morrow would bring the solution of all problems. The Emperor Napoleon was still taking the utmost pains to obtain pledges which would bind Austria. At that price, whatever his desire to keep everything in Germany, he would perhaps have rested content, on the principle of retaining only one stronghold on the Oder as a safeguard for his tribute. He would then have withdrawn the balance of his troops.

More politic than his opponent, he had more or less resigned himself to this sacrifice, when he observed the Tsar Alexander's insistence from the first on securing the evacuation of the strongholds and a part of Prussia; but the question of Austria, which in principle was only accessory, had now, through the importance attached to it by both parties, become the principal question, and the negotiations shifted their ground. Russia was diverted from her first aim. Everything was subordinated to the fear of seeing the peace with Austria broken. The Emperor Napoleon retained the fortresses to which he clung. Russia believed that she had served the interests of Europe, even at the cost of her own, and that she had gained everything by taking only a conditional pledge, which, according to her, could not compromise Austria and the peace of Europe,<sup>1</sup> since it resulted in the French armies being flung into Spain, where the Emperor Napoleon would be occupied for a long time. She was afraid that too much insistence on the evacuation of the fortresses might prevent the departure of the troops and draw the political attention of the conqueror upon Germany, just when Austria was already fixing too much; she believed that by forcing the storm to a safe distance it would pass, and that the course and requirements of this Spanish war would within a few months bring about the evacuation which, in her view, was the most important outcome for assuring universal tranquillity in the future.

Confidence, as I have already said, was undermined by

<sup>1</sup> Article 10 of the Convention of Erfurt.

Austria's clumsy dissimulation. The politics of that period would have been aided by open advances to the Tsar Alexander, and by the display of large and generous views regarding the fate of Prussia. But Austria, so threatening and so heavily hostile, and with her mind already made up for war, could not take advantage of the circumstances; she appeared to be thinking only of herself, and to be proceeding with regard only to Spain, which, in the pressing and existing danger of Prussia, seemed to Russia to be a very remote interest; and Russia, indeed, probably witnessed with some secret satisfaction the spectacle of French troops being summoned away for employment in the southern extremities of Europe.

This clumsy tendency of the Austrian cabinet was injurious to all the business in hand. Baron Vincent, however, was pleased with his mission, or ought to have been, as he was able to make sure that the Tsar Alexander was independently showing his detachment from any pledges which might produce aggressive action against Austria, and that he was even declaring boldly against being led into any attack on that Power. I do not know whether he was, or was not, aware of the eventual clause of co-operation and consent given by France in order that Russia should, if possible, secure the cession of Wallachia and Moldavia.<sup>1</sup> On the day of my departure I was assured by someone that he had had wind of this arrangement, and appeared to be highly displeased, as if the dangers of Austria and Europe in the existing situation of the world could possibly at that moment be in Turkey, should Russia in any case be successful.<sup>2</sup> The Tsar, who had put up a long resistance on the Austrian question, and believing that he had provided for the greatest political interests of the moment by undertaking only eventual pledges, afterwards gave his entire attention to what was of most particular interest to himself.

Like the ministers and the Court, the sovereigns themselves began to grow weary, and tired of this play-acting existence, and especially of these quite inconclusive discussions. Sharp

<sup>1</sup> Articles 8 and 9 of the Convention.

<sup>2</sup> See A. Vandal: *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, I, 494.

words often passed between the Emperors. Napoleon, in turn dexterous, conciliatory and charming, and occasionally insistent too, saw that he could obtain nothing from his ally, who remained constantly within the circle he had traced for himself. On two occasions he tried anger. As these means had not in the least altered Alexander's resolves, and as his outbursts were more of a diplomatic trick than genuine fury, his anger quickly cooled down and he reverted to more conciliatory terms.

In the end he contented himself with what he had obtained, which in fact was much more than what he had believed he could hope for at the outset. At heart he was highly pleased, in the state of affairs resulting from the affairs of Spain, at having tinged the interior of the alliance with a marked anti-English colour, by the proposal agreed upon and to be put forward to propose peace to England. It was agreed that the sovereigns should write to the King of England; that M. Rumiantzof should come to Paris; that a wide political move should be made. And this was what the Emperor Napoleon desired, as indeed, I repeat, he should desire, as it offered proof of the unity of the allies, distracted attention from Spain, and threw the whole odium of the war upon England: for it could readily be foreseen, from then onwards, that the complication of Spanish affairs, advantageous to England through the insurrection of the Spaniards, would render these proposals useless.<sup>1</sup> This agreement between the two Emperors also kept Austria heedful and obliged her to postpone her schemes.

The imminent need of Sweden to enter the Continental System, the only weapon possible against England, completed the checked measures of Tilsit, and was a result of the position in which Europe was placed by the egotism of England and the unrelenting war policy of Mr. Pitt. A far-sighted policy was doubtless called for to deliver Sweden, and consequently Finland,<sup>2</sup> to the ambition of her powerful neighbour, but such was the force of circumstances.

<sup>1</sup> Articles 1 to 3 of the Convention.

<sup>2</sup> Article 5 imposed, as an absolute condition of eventual peace with England, the recognition of Russian dominion in Finland.

The efficacy of the Continental System depended entirely on its universal application. To leave an outlet for English products in the North meant the paralyzing of all other measures, and made illusory all the sacrifices already offered. Inability to close the gates of Turkey had flooded Southern Germany and Poland, and the drawbacks of this were already all too perceptible. What scruples was the Emperor Napoleon to entertain? Could he reasonably admit that Sweden, who would be left the choice of closing her ports to the English or of being exposed to a war with Russia and France, would prefer these real and imminent dangers to the momentary inconveniences of a commercial embarrassment which, in any case, had been adopted by the whole Continent, and submitted to even by Austria, notwithstanding her hostile frame of mind? Admitting that the King's exasperation would push matters to an extremity, did the Emperor, even in that supposition, owe more consideration to Sweden, at this time his avowed enemy, than had formerly been shown to her by England, her ally? Was it reasonable to suppose that the Stockholm cabinet, which, in consequence of an undertaking signed on December 3, 1804,<sup>1</sup> had armed, taken the field, and compromised itself with regard to France and Russia to safeguard Hanover for England, would not sacrifice itself for that Power which, forty-six days after obtaining this sound and loyal service, had trafficked in its mortal remains? Mr. Pitt had made Russia an offer of Finland, along with Wallachia and Moldavia, in order to persuade her to what was styled a "treaty of concert," which formed the third coalition.<sup>2</sup> England had given this unparalleled example of the betrayal

<sup>1</sup> Secret convention between His Britannic Majesty and the King of Sweden, signed at Stockholm on December 3, 1804 (Martens: *Recueil des traités*, Supp. IV, 158). This convention was also published in the *Moniteur Universel*, 1806, No. 46. In return for £80,000 per annum, Gustavus IV put the port of Aland and the island of Rügen at the disposal of the English.

<sup>2</sup> Treaty between Russia and England of April 11, 1805, to which Austria adhered on August 9th. Cf. Martens: *Recueil des traités*, II, 433. The proposal had been put forward by England on January 19, 1805.

by a great State of a weak one, and had at the same time betrayed the Porte, whose old and loyal friend she proclaimed herself: how could she inspire Sweden with blind devotion?

Indeed, the annals of diplomacy offer nothing to match this conduct on the part of England; and a still greater outrage upon Europe lies in the fact that all these intrigues took place in the train of the proposals made by the Tuileries cabinet, which, in the general situation at that time, were more than ever capable of ending the woes, the misery and the dangers of stricken Europe if the London cabinet had cherished any thoughts beyond those of purely selfish advantage.

The French cabinet, against which there was so much outcry, and against which the whole of Europe took up arms, followed a totally different line of conduct, despite the fact that a major interest might well have afforded it an excuse, when in 1812 it refused Sweden to appropriate Norway at the expense of Denmark, an ally of France.<sup>1</sup> At that moment the Russian war was close at hand. The Emperor knew that his refusal would fling Sweden into the arms of Russia. But nothing could induce him to sacrifice the interests of an ally who had shown him fidelity.

Before returning to events at Erfurt, I think I should go further with some details of that "treaty of concert"; it was noteworthy as revealing the foundations which England thenceforward believed it advantageous to establish, and which later she was to force upon Europe in the pacification of 1814. This treaty, the outcome of the overtures and offers put forward on January 19th, was signed at Petersburg on April 11th. One article of the treaty promised to Russia Finland, Wallachia and Moldavia. The others stipulated the independence of Holland, united to the Netherlands, the independence of Switzerland, the restoration of the King of Sardinia in

<sup>1</sup> Through the medium of the consul Signeul, in May 1812, Bernadotte offered to side with the French alliance and against Russia, on condition that he received Norway, which was to be taken from the Danes. The latter were to be compensated with Swedish Pomerania and a sum of twelve millions. Napoleon rejected the proposals with scorn. Cf. *Souvenirs d'un officier polonais* (Brandt), p. 341.

Piedmont with extended territories, the evacuation of Italy, Naples to be given to the House of Bourbon, and finally what was termed a European status guaranteeing the independence of all States and forming a barrier against future usurpations.

As I re-read my notes to-day for the co-ordination of my memoirs, I cannot find myself writing of this date without my mind turning to a later date (April 11, 1814, the Treaty of Fontainebleau), which concluded high destinies and provided the means of fulfilling that plan which until then had doubtless seemed only a dream fashioned in 1805.

I return to Erfurt. As circumstances demanded that Sweden should make common cause with the Continent at large, it is obvious that Russia alone, by reason of her situation, should be entrusted with the duty of compelling her. In the Emperor's position at that moment, it was impossible for him to entertain hopes that she would take up arms without demanding all the advantages to which circumstances enabled her to lay claim. Even in the general interest of the cause, he could not offer her less than England had suggested to her for her own advantages. Further, in this part of the general negotiation, there was the particular fact that Russia made herself be implored and urged to undertake engagements against Sweden, and even, still later, to wage and prosecute that war. The secret of this moderation lay, no doubt, less in some family relationships which it was desirable to handle with seeming circumspection, than in the certainty that the Emperor Napoleon would so far insistently press upon Russia to ensure that such handling would not prejudicially affect his interests.

It has often been wondered what the circumstances were which made possible the founding, at Tilsit, of an alliance, an intimacy so contrary to the political direction hitherto pursued by Russia and France: my remarks about England go far to explain this change, and the facilities which the Emperor Napoleon found at Tilsit to bring the Tsar Alexander to adopt his system. The impressions made upon the latter sovereign by the offers and pretensions of the London cabinet, as well as the conduct of the latter towards their allies, could

not redound to their advantage. Their co-operation, always belated, had spoilt this campaign as well as the previous one. Russia, victimized like so many others by the trust which she had placed in them, was in a position to blame them for a third of the reverses which she suffered. The selfishness of the English cabinet penetrated all their actions as it did their words. In the event of victory the needed guineas would nevertheless have settled everything. But in defeat they could work no repair, and with a sovereign of Alexander's character, if he was to remain friendly with the ally of whom he had reason to complain, it was essential that he could at least weigh his conduct and do justice to his intentions. Here, bad faith was manifest. The completely selfish views of England were glaringly obvious. And so the Russian cabinet believed that they were honestly freed from any obligation of consideration towards the Power which had shown none to anyone else. This frame of mind, unchanged since Tilsit, was clearly serving us admirably, and it would have lasted for a long time if the Emperor Napoleon had been able to retain the system which he had apparently adopted.

At Erfurt, the negotiations, although not altogether attaining their end, were taking the direction which might possibly suit the Emperor Napoleon. Convinced at last that he would not alter the fixed convictions of the Tsar, and that he would not induce him to go further than a pledge to act only in the event of Austria being the first to attack, he resigned himself to being satisfied with this.<sup>1</sup> This made it easier to reach agreement on the other points, because the Tsar Alexander imagined that he had gained everything, as he maintained that Austria would never be so foolish as to make herself the aggressor and enter the lists alone. As the Austrian question, the source of so much dispute, had virtually over-ridden that of the evacuation of the Oder fortresses and that of Prussia, everything was made easy, and the Emperor, proud of having yielded nothing and strong in his German position by reason of the still occupied strongholds, which, in token of the perfect agreement between the chief allies, would necessarily exert influence on

<sup>1</sup> Clause 10 of the Convention of Erfurt.

Austria as on Europe at large, was able, as he desired, to make use of his forces for Spain. At that moment he flattered himself that he would bring Spain to submission in one campaign, and that it would only be necessary to leave there a few garrisons and three small supervisory corps. Trusting in the promises of his ally, he started on the movement of French troops towards the Peninsula before all the questions were finally settled, and some of the regiments making for Spain marched through Erfurt.

To retain the Oder fortresses was, in the Emperor's situation, a primary concern, because, with ordinary garrisons, he upheld his position in Prussia and sustained his political and military influence in the eyes of Germany. Another great advantage of that occupation, and the one which he valued highest at that moment, was that it gave him the nucleus of an army on the flank of Austria. The Swedish and Turkish questions were settled in turn, and in the end Russia was content, as regards Prussia, with some compounding arrangements and the remission of several millions, which fundamentally counted for nothing as she did not regain either political or territorial independence. Moreover, these financial questions were dealt with only at the last moment, when there was so much weariness with the congress that nobody cared about anything except going away. Russia had in view the prospect of obtaining the cession of Moldavia and Wallachia, and even of acquiring Finland. These considerations, important no doubt, especially in the position of the Tsar Alexander with relation to his own nation, coupled with the consideration which had caused the sacrifice of all interests to what was believed to be the salvation of Austria, overshadowed the inevitable later consequences of the armed French occupation of fortified towns in the heart of Germany.

The Emperor Napoleon was able to transfer part of his armies to Spain, and to go thither in person, without thereby yielding any of his occupation or remitting anything of what was due to him. On both counts therefore there was a measure of satisfaction. Austria, who had threatened the Emperor Napoleon when he was in Spain, was in her turn menaced by

Russia if she took the initiative in war. The Emperor Napoleon clearly had not wasted his time. Unquestionably, in return for her compliance, he was offering Russia several tempting opportunities to satisfy her ambitions; but at a cost of two wars, of which, though one might be expected to realize this object, the other, with England, was likely to turn out to be a costly undertaking; and neither of which was really to her interest at that particular moment. She had even to face the possibility of a third war if Sweden refused to enter the Continental System. Thus it looked as if Russia would have her hands as full as we could wish, and as we would have ours in Spain. She had, moreover, the added embarrassment of being a country rich in products but without any means of exporting them. Wallachia and Moldavia, which she hoped to seize from the Turks, might be relied on to occupy her attentions for some considerable time; and the continuance of the war with England, whose effect was to close all outlets for her commerce, would probably create plenty of domestic difficulties. The war against Sweden, the prize of which was to be Finland, was the real recompense for her sacrifices; and in truth Russia had no cause to haggle over the price of so valuable an acquisition, on the very threshold of her capital, since this unique opportunity to realize the aspirations of Alexander's predecessors might not recur. But was it a time to jeopardize, for the sake of such personal advantages, general interests that seemed at once more urgent, and, in view of the growing power of France, more important? Was it not possible, and even necessary, to reconcile these interests with the interests of Prussia and Germany, when the whole future tranquillity of the world depended on such a reconciliation? The question was of fundamental importance.

Those who did not follow the discussions while they were actually in progress, and so are not privy to the various considerations which prevented them from having a more satisfactory outcome, will blame the Petersburg Government for not having played its cards better. They will reproach it with having sacrificed general interests to considerations of only immediate significance. It is for history to judge; my

duty, as I view it, is to estimate the achievements of the Erfurt Conference, and, in the interests of truth, to explain the considerations which made Russia subscribe to the convention resulting from it. The change of policy in Russia after Tilsit shocked the opinions and interfered with the habits of the nobility. Lack of imports brought ruin to the country; commercial difficulties and a falling rate of exchange led to internal disaffection, and solid opposition to the Government's policy showed itself. All these considerations made it essential for the Tsar Alexander at all costs to obtain, from the Erfurt conversations, results which would stimulate his people's enthusiasm and rally them in favour of his policy. It was necessary to justify in their eyes, not only the alliance, but also the war with England and the meeting itself. This object was achieved. There had been considerable opposition to the meeting in Petersburg. The Imperial family, the nobles, even the middle classes, were solidly against the project. The fate of the Spanish princes at Bayonne suggested dangerous possibilities; and everyone begged the Emperor not to leave Russia. Supplications, tears, argument—every means was used to dissuade him. It was pointed out that, by exposing his person to danger, he jeopardized the security of the State, that the Emperor Napoleon's motive in inviting him to a meeting on territory under his control, and in the midst of his troops, was to take him captive and hold him as a hostage, that if a meeting was absolutely essential it should take place as in the case of Tilsit, at the extremity of the two frontiers. The Tsar indignantly repulsed these suggestions and set off for Erfurt.

Although it was an act of condescension on their part, all the German rulers came to Erfurt in order to ingratiate themselves with the allied Powers and to form, in some sort, their court. These attentions were not greatly appreciated, since they led to much waste of time, and prevented the allied Powers from discussing their affairs over dinner, at which meal most of them met daily. The German rulers, even the kings, were so inconspicuous, and behaved towards us in so familiar a manner if we happened to forget what was due to them,

that the position was often embarrassing. Apart from when they were hoping to make their homage acceptable to the master of the world, their main object appeared to be to efface themselves. Princess Stéphanie of Baden was much sought after, and was often entertained by her brother-in-law the Tsar.<sup>1</sup> Her charm, her intelligence, the distinction of her manners, charmed everyone. The Tsar Alexander was pleased often to praise them, and repeated this praise even afterwards in Petersburg.

The Emperor Napoleon took command of the ceremonial of the congress, like a sovereign in his own capital. Everything took place in the best possible style. But I doubt whether the princes who came to pay court left satisfied. Their presence was doubtless flattering, but was often really embarrassing, as they must sometimes have noticed for themselves. Beside, these sovereigns found themselves treated rather as Austria had formerly treated her electors, and they may well have discovered that although their new title had freed them from their former functions, it had in no way altered their position with regard to their protector.

Since the Emperor had arranged for the best tragic pieces to come from Paris, there was a performance almost every day. The Emperors went together; and everything was seized on that could be taken as referring to their august meeting. For instance, the line:

“A great man’s friendship is a boon divine. . . .”

was noticed by the Emperor Alexander himself, and used as a means of paying a most graceful public homage to his ally.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperors parted<sup>3</sup> fairly well satisfied with the arrange-

<sup>1</sup> Stéphanie de Beauharnais, daughter of Count Claude de Beauharnais, cousin-germane of Queen Hortense and adopted daughter of Napoleon I, had married on April 8, 1806, Charles, hereditary prince of Baden, who became Grand Duke on June 10, 1811, and was the brother of the Empress Elizabeth Alexievnna (Louise-Marie-Auguste of Baden), wife of Alexander I.

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire’s *Œdipe*, Act I, scene i., spoken by Philoctète. This performance took place on October 4, 1808.

<sup>3</sup> October 14, 1808.

ments they had made, but at heart mutually displeased. The illusions of Tilsit had vanished, and there was deep mutual distrust, but the desire to maintain the alliance as a means of inducing England to make peace, and of consolidating the peace of Europe, had been frankly expressed by the Tsar and his ministers; and it was thus possible to continue to work towards this end. In any case Russia's new interests, the advantages she hoped to gain from the arrangements just concluded, made the alliance for her at once a duty and a necessity.

Matters only took definite shape during the last three days; until then, the Foreign Minister<sup>1</sup> did not even know the Emperor's whole mind. It was only at the very moment of signing the Convention that he had his final instructions. Each day brought changes. His Majesty proceeded, as it were, from day to day, adjusting his policy, and even his views on what might be expected to further it or to put obstacles in its way. Nor did any of the other parties to the Convention know his position until the last moment. Then, indeed, there was a scramble to finish, as much to avoid fresh incidents as to get away; and everyone turned a deliberately blind eye to the reproaches which he would, perhaps, later deserve.

The Tsar Alexander, who was freely accused at this time of blindness and weakness, showed great character, as was recognized even by the Emperor Napoleon, who often complained of it. If Austria, I say again, had explained herself then as she did later through Prince Schwarzenberg,<sup>2</sup> who argued clumsily only in his manifesto, it is probable that the events of 1811 [1809?] which ended in upsetting the whole of Europe, would never have taken place.

The moment was one of the most favourable for arriving at a real peace, since the position in which the course of events in Spain had placed the Emperor Napoleon inclined him to make sacrifices. He was personally most reluctant to go to Spain, but felt that only his presence could settle matters there, or even bring about any change in the existing situation.

<sup>1</sup> Champagny, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>2</sup> Prince Schwarzenberg's mission to Petersburg, February 1809.

More unity on the part of the great Powers, and, on the part of England, a little genuine desire to restore peace to the world, without sacrificing her legitimate advantages, and an understanding would have been reached. France would again have taken her place in the political system most suitable to her circumstances, which was her due by virtue of her power and renown. As far as I could judge at the time, the Emperor's main object was peace. It is true that he wanted to be able to dispose of his troops in order to send them to Spain; but so long as England refused to negotiate, there was no other way of finding an honourable solution to his difficulties in that country. As to the rigid maintenance of the Continental System—it followed naturally from the same line of reasoning.

To make peace before Russia had been able to reap the advantages which the latest arrangements offered her would have suited his policy admirably, and was, in his eyes, a real compensation for the sacrifices he made. He was unyielding in the matter of the indemnity to be paid by Prussia; but Russia recognized that this claim was legitimate, and limited her activities, so far as it was concerned, to persuading him to forgo it. The difficulty, in any case, would not have arisen immediately, and then only in regard to the guarantees that were to be offered, about which agreement could be reached. The Emperor appeared to be genuinely reconciled to making considerable concessions for the sake of attaining a general peace; and the essential thing, therefore, was to make the best use of this frame of mind. The negotiations would inevitably have brought every question under review, each Power having to take account of its neighbour. There can be no doubt that the great common interest of opening out better prospects for the future peace of the world would have overshadowed all the separate ambitions of the negotiating Powers.

The threats of Austria, I repeat, far from giving support to the policy which it was in Russia's interest, and intention, to uphold, thwarted and upset all her plans and only served to further ours. "Can I evacuate the fortresses on the Oder, give up my whole position in Prussia? In fact, weaken myself in Germany?" the Emperor asked the Tsar, and with reason.

"And this at a moment when, taking advantage of my difficulties in Spain, Austria threatens me? Is it not in the interest of the alliance that, just when we are going to make a drive to force a peace on England, we should appear united, and I strong, in the eyes of our common enemy and of an Austria inclined to become also an enemy? England's wish to bring to an end this occupation of Prussia, as well as of Spain, will give us one more concession to offer her, and therefore one more tool for achieving peace. Is my ally, my friend, seriously prepared to suggest that I should abandon the only position from which I can threaten the Austrian flank in the event of her attacking me whilst my troops are in the South of Europe and four hundred leagues from France? What I was prepared to do four months ago, I cannot undertake to do to-day. What would then have furthered the interests of Prussia, and therefore the interests of the alliance, would now be contrary to our objective. The continued stay of a certain number of troops in Prussia, when I am withdrawing all my forces from Germany to send them into the Peninsula, cannot concern Russia. Their withdrawal proves my confidence in you. Will you not, then, trust me? Do not allow baseless fears to destroy the fruits of our agreement, which, at a moment when we urgently need to show ourselves united and strong, is itself the reason for my warlike attitude. If you insist, of course, I have no alternative but to agree; but in that case I should prefer to withdraw from Spain and settle my quarrel with Austria at once. If I am to evacuate the fortresses on the Oder, you ought to evacuate the Danube fortresses. It is in your interest to hold them, since you are bound to obtain Wallachia and Moldavia. When the Porte realizes that intervention on my part is out of the question, it will rush to accept whatever conditions you care to dictate. Thus the occupation of Prussia, which I wish to prolong, is even more in your interest than in mine. In course of time you will reap the advantage, whilst I shall gain nothing."

Such were the lines of reasoning induced by Austria's appearance and behaviour at Erfurt. As to the consequences, the French troops remained in Prussia and the Russian troops

in Wallachia. In point of fact Austria, upset just those arrangements towards whose conclusion she might have been expected, in theory, to contribute.

Let me revert to the conversations of the two Emperors, which were, as I have already said, sometimes more than a little animated. On one occasion, for instance, Napoleon, unable to have his own way with the Tsar Alexander (they were discussing the Austrian question), tried the experiment of working himself up into a rage, and, losing control of himself, threw his hat (I think it was) on the ground and stamped on it. The Tsar Alexander stood still (I should point out that the two monarchs nearly always walked up and down the Emperor's study while they talked), and, looking at him with a smile, said, when he had calmed down a little, as he did almost at once: "When you become violent I just become stubborn. With me anger is of no avail. Let us discuss, and be reasonable, or I go." As he spoke he moved towards the door, and would have acted on his words if the Emperor Napoleon had not hurried forward to stop him. They resumed their conversation calmly, and the Emperor Napoleon gave way. A similar but less violent incident occurred in connection with the question of Prussia, since, as the Emperor remarked to me more than once, the Tsar became every day more obstinately settled in his purposes.

These details were given me by the Emperor Napoleon. "Your friend the Tsar," he said, "is mulish. He's deaf to what he doesn't want to hear. This wretched business in Spain is costing me a pretty penny!" The Emperor, who on that particular day was very confidential, and even kindly, with me, spoke afterwards about the overtures which he hoped to receive from the Tsar Alexander as *friendly advice* and as a *mark of interest*, in regard to the desirability of his *marrying again*, and the *need* for him to have children in order to *consolidate his work and found a dynasty*. The Emperor wanted M. de Talleyrand or myself to broach the matter with the Tsar, making it appear that we were personally in favour of the project, and that it was in the general interest as much as in our own, since it would secure our future and, at the same

time, cool the Emperor's bellicose temper and make him more inclined to stay in France; all this was to be done, of course, with suitable circumspection. M. de Talleyrand had already explained the business to me, and had made me promise to open the subject with the Tsar Alexander.

Noticing probably that what he had said made a painful impression on me, the Emperor Napoleon added: "My object is to find out if Alexander really is a friend, if he takes a real interest in the welfare of France. I love Josephine; and I shall never be happier than I am now. But from what Alexander says we shall learn the feeling amongst the crowned heads about the possibility of my marrying again. For me it would be a sacrifice; but a sacrifice that my family, Talleyrand, Fouché, demand of me for the sake of France. A son would unquestionably mean greater stability. No one likes my brothers; and they are not very capable. You might perhaps prefer Eugène, as others do, because he's grown-up, and has married a Bavarian princess, and has children; but it would not be to your advantage. Adopted children are not satisfactory for founding new dynasties. I have other plans for him."

The Emperor asked me several questions about the Grand Duchesses, and wished to know what I thought of these princesses. "Only one," I replied, "is of a marriageable age;<sup>1</sup> but remember what happened in the case of the projected Swedish marriage.<sup>2</sup> They won't agree to a change of religion."

<sup>1</sup> Alexander had two unmarried sisters. The younger, Anne Pavlowna, born at Petersburg on January 18, 1795, was not yet fourteen years old. She married King William II of Holland on February 21, 1816. The elder, Catherine Pavlowna, was born at Petersburg on May 21, 1788. She was thus twenty years old. She married on August 3, 1809, Duke Frederick-George of Holstein-Oldenburg. Widowed on December 27, 1812, she married a second time on January 24, 1816, her second husband being the Grand Duke Charles-Frederick of Württemberg.

<sup>2</sup> A marriage had been planned between the Grand Duchess Marie, eldest daughter of Paul I and sister of Alexander, and Gustavus IV, King of Sweden, who married Princess Frederica-Dorothea of Baden on October 31, 1797. The Grand Duchess Marie married the Grand Duke Charles-Frederick of Saxe-Weimar on August 3, 1804.

The Emperor replied that he was not thinking of the Grand Duchesses; he had not yet made up his mind, and only wanted to know whether his divorce would be approved by the Russians or would shock them—in short, what were the feelings of the Tsar Alexander about it. I felt that he was hoping that the idea might please the fancy of the Petersburg Government; that it would be, perhaps, a tempting bait to Russia; and that he had decided to govern his conduct by her reactions in the matter.

The Emperor, who might so easily have turned the conversation with his ally on to these paths, was insistent that the Tsar should open the question. He doubtless hoped that the subject would be broached so politely and correctly that he would be able later on to find an indirect hint on the part of the Tsar in favour of his sister. I ought to point out, in this respect, that my observations about religion, and about the rejected Swedish marriage, were coldly received. They obviously displeased the Emperor, who shrugged and pulled a face, as though to say that there was no comparison between the Tuileries and Stockholm.

M. de Talleyrand spoke to the Tsar Alexander after I had spoken. It was not difficult to persuade him to speak to the Emperor Napoleon, partly for our own sakes, and partly because the project in question, since it would make for peace, was as much in Europe's interest as in that of France. He did all in his power to oblige us, but confined himself, as he explained to me, to general observations as to what would be the wisest and most far-sighted policy for Napoleon to adopt.

I should point out that the question of a divorce had been very much to the fore a year previously, just when I was leaving for Russia, and that then the Minister of Police had put forward a proposal for a marriage with a Frenchwoman; it met with no favour. The Duke of Otranto was responsible for this idea; and his object was, on the one hand, to sound the Empress Josephine on the question of divorce, and, on the other, to prepare French opinion for such an eventuality.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Regarding Fouché's intrigues, see *Joséphine Répudiée*, by Frédéric Masson, p. 30, and *Fouché*, by Louis Madelin, II, 61.

When the Emperor had left, I set off for Weimar and Lobikau<sup>1</sup> with the Tsar Alexander to visit the Duchess of Courland. In the course of this visit, thanks to the good offices of the Duke of Courland, I arranged for the marriage of his daughter with M. Edmond de Périgord.<sup>2</sup> The Duke was kind enough to take me in his carriage as far as Leipzig,<sup>3</sup> where I returned to my own carriage and started for Petersburg with one more year there in front of me, assuming that the Emperor kept the promise which he had made to me when we parted.

I shall pass over all the events that took place between the Erfurt Conference and the outbreak of the war with Austria—a war which I had done my utmost to prevent. These and the consequent events will be dealt with elsewhere.

Since the peace with Austria<sup>4</sup> changed the whole direction of the Emperor's policy, and made apparent its real tendency, revealing his real purposes in regard to Poland and the occupation of Oldenburg,<sup>5</sup> and the form that this occupation was

<sup>1</sup> The Duchess of Courland's castle in Saxony. They arrived there on October 16, 1808, at five o'clock in the evening, and left at eleven o'clock. See *Souvenirs de la Duchesse de Dino*, published by her grand-daughter, the Countess Jean de Castellane, p. 226, and *Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Corr. Pol.*, Russia, 147, p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> Alexandre-Edmond de Talleyrand-Périgord, later Duke of Dino and Duke of Talleyrand-Périgord, nephew of the Prince of Benevento, born on August 2, 1787, accompanied Caulaincourt to the French Embassy in Russia as an attaché. He married on April 22, 1809, at Frankfort-on-Maine, Dorothée de Buren, born on August 21, 1793, daughter of the Duke Peter of Courland and of his third wife, the Countess Anne-Charlotte-Dorothea of Medem. Regarding this marriage see, apart from the *Souvenirs de la Duchesse de Dino*, Talleyrand's *Mémoires*, II, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Before returning to Petersburg, Alexander visited Königsberg, Riga and Libau.

<sup>4</sup> The Armistice of Znaim July 12, 1809, and the Peace of Vienna October 14, 1809.

<sup>5</sup> By the terms of the *senatus consultum* of December 13, 1808, the German coast had been annexed by France. Napoleon offered the Duke Peter-Frederick-Louis of Holstein-Eutin, who acted as the reigning Grand Duke of Oldenburg's regent, and

to take; since his present policy bore no relation to the intentions which he so frequently proclaimed, everything henceforth conflicted with my previous words and conduct, which I was not prepared to repudiate. I pleaded vigorously for my recall, feeling myself unable to deceive someone who had been loyal to us when our position was critical in Spain, who had been so frank in his relations, who had so faithfully carried out, to the very letter, every pledge he had given. Finding that no amount of insistence would procure my recall, I pleaded illness<sup>1</sup> and, not only directly, but also indirectly

who was Alexander's uncle, the alternatives of either staying where he was and putting up with the restrictions imposed on his sovereignty by the establishment of French Customs, or receiving Erfurt as compensation. The Duke preferred to keep his territory; but Napoleon, by a decree of January 22, 1811, ordered Oldenburg to be taken, thus ignoring Article 12 of the Treaty of Tilsit, which guaranteed the Ducal House in the peaceful possession of its dominions. The French administration, taking its stand on the general terms of the *senatus consultum* of December 13, 1810, had, as a matter of fact, already got control of the Duchy. The Tsar Alexander answered with a written protest, which Champagny refused to accept.

<sup>1</sup> Caulaincourt to the Emperor: "January 17, 1811—Sire: Since my repeated applications to Your Majesty's Minister have remained unanswered, I respectfully take the liberty of addressing myself directly to you in the matter of being replaced in my post here. After a stay of four years in a climate that has totally ruined my health, I take the liberty, Sire, of flattering myself that my services in Russia, as those near to Your Majesty, have justified the confidence with which you have honoured me, and which I deserve. May I then hope that Your Majesty will favourably consider my case? In the existing circumstances anyone would prove more useful to you at Petersburg than your Master of the Horse. I would go further. I serve my master, and seek to advance the interests confided to me, because I have more devotion than strength; but in reality I have for a long time now been a sick man. In ordinary circumstances, many another would most certainly have taken to his bed. Your Majesty desired me to stay in Russia for a year; obediently I have served you there for four. I presume, therefore, to beg Your Majesty's permission not to have to spend here the remainder of a winter which is likely to kill me, and the honour of again being near your august person. I am . . ." (*Archives de Caulaincourt*, file 2, minute).

through my friends, I made my position so clear to the Emperor and was so emphatic that he had no alternative but to make up his mind to replace me in order to avoid an open rupture; for I had fully resolved at any cost to leave the Embassy.<sup>1</sup>

As I did not share the senseless prejudices and enthusiasms of the Government, and had no wish to lend myself to the Emperor's policy by providing him with pretexts in justification of his coldness towards, and disapproval of, the Russian Government, my letters naturally displeased him. I had sought in my despatches to avoid anything which might lend itself to false interpretations; and they had therefore failed for some considerable time to give satisfaction. Whenever there was an occasion for doing so, *I paid a deserved tribute to the Russian Government's conduct*, and even stated its grievances, without troubling whether my frankness would pain the Emperor. The Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Police<sup>2</sup> poured special agents into Russia to make trouble, and to try to collect material for a manifesto. They had just started fresh correspondence, not in cipher and sent through the post, with the Consul-General.<sup>3</sup> They were asked to send two despatches a week dealing with politics, trade and gossip; and I received letters through the post in a manner calculated to irritate and embarrass me.

These methods met with no success. M. de Lesseps, the

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon informed Alexander of this change in a letter of February 28, 1811, in which he said, "The Duke of Vicenza's ill health obliges me to send him letters of recall" (*Correspondance*, 17395). Caulaincourt was replaced by the Comte de Lauriston.

<sup>2</sup> Champagny and Savary.

<sup>3</sup> Baron Jean-Baptiste-Barthélemy de Lesseps, born at Cette on January 27, 1766, died at Lisbon on April 6, 1834, whose father, Mathieu, had already been Consul-General at Petersburg, and had taken part as an interpreter in the Pérouse expedition. Appointed Consul at Cronstadt in October 1788, he had passed directly, in 1792, to the Petersburg Consulate, which post he retained until 1812. We shall meet with him again as a commissioner at Moscow during the French expedition. After this he was *chargé d'affaires* at Lisbon from July 1815 to November 17, 1833. (See *La Vie de Pierre Ruffin*, by Henri Dehézain, I, 77.)

Consul-General, an honourable and worthy man, failed in none of his duties. Like myself, he shut his eyes to nothing. Since our Ministry was unable to find what it sought in the truthful and impartial language which he employed, and since his despatches, like those of most of his colleagues, contained no details and news that could be used in bulletins to create the desired impression, he was more than once reprimanded; and when I arrived in Paris I found that this honest man was in as bad odour as myself. The Emperor had just cancelled with his own hand the annual gratuity which the Ministry of Marine allowed him to cover his expenses. There was even some question of his being replaced. No gratuity was ever more deserved or better earned, as M. de Lesseps looked after the interests of French shipping better than he looked after his own interests; and unquestionably he was above suspicion in the matter of bribery. His thirty years of service, his probity, his well-known trustworthiness, all counted for nothing. Although he was a gentleman, because he had been honourable and the father of five children, he had no private resources, and was now likely to find himself suddenly deprived of all means of earning a livelihood.

The Russian Government took no account of ministerial tricks, and changed neither the direction nor even the essential character of its policy. The Tsar Alexander and Count Rumiantsof remained impassive in the midst of these attacks. Even their language remained the same. "A wise monarch," the Tsar Alexander said to me more than once, "does not allow the fate of the nation he governs to depend on the intrigues and ambitions of a handful of mischief-makers. Influence is being brought to bear on the Emperor Napoleon to excite him. Time will make all that clear. If he wishes to go to war with me, *he* will have to fire the first shot."

All the news reaching me from Paris, and all that I learned, left me in no doubt as to the Emperor Napoleon's feelings towards me. Unable to find anything reprehensible in my conduct, or in my manner of conducting his affairs, he took vengeance on my friends, and exiled Madame de C—, whom, without her asking him, he had appointed a lady-in-

waiting at the Court at the time of his marriage with the Empress Marie Louise.<sup>1</sup> He had even made much of her, paid her special attention on all his journeys, probably thinking thereby to gratify me, since at the time I was useful to him in Russia. This piece of news, which I received some time before leaving Petersburg, enlightened me as to the way the wind was blowing politically, and as to my own position. I was told at the same time that if the Emperor did not banish me, he would make me feel his displeasure in some other way. Since I learned also of the forthcoming departure of M. de Lauriston, who was coming to take my place, I found plenty of compensation for the other news. What I chiefly desired was to escape from a situation in which the political burden heaped on me weighed as heavily on my principles as on my opinions.

In fact, M. de Lauriston arrived some considerable time afterwards.<sup>2</sup> His journey had been protracted because the Emperor had insisted on his passing through Danzig to see his troops and military preparations, the object being no doubt to lend a slightly hostile character to the object of his mission. Such, at least, was the commonly accepted explanation in Petersburg. Thus M. de Lauriston's visit to Danzig was doubly disagreeable, and his rectitude and loyalty were put to a painful test from the very first.

In accordance with my instructions, I remained with him for several days, and then set forth myself.<sup>3</sup> Fortified by my consciousness of having served the Emperor well, and of having told him the truth, I pressed on to Paris, where I arrived on June 5th, at nine o'clock in the morning. One of my friends had met me near Châlons. What he told me about the Emperor's intentions, and about his irritation with

<sup>1</sup> Mme de Canisy had been appointed lady-in-waiting to the Empress Marie Louise on February 25, 1810. Before that, she had been lady-in-waiting to Josephine, September 23, 1805. She had been invited at the end of 1810 by Savary to stay in Normandy with his father.

<sup>2</sup> M. de Lauriston arrived in Petersburg on May 9, 1811.

<sup>3</sup> M. de Caulaincourt left Petersburg on May 19, 1811, having presented his letters of recall on May 11th to Alexander.

me, was both disagreeable and perturbing. It appeared, however, that important interests and the situation in Spain, which, according to the latest news, was far from satisfactory, would make it necessary for the Emperor once more to put off the execution of his projects directed against Russia, and that the war, which a month previously everyone had generally regarded as imminent, would be again postponed. This change was attributed to the news from Spain, and the general feeling was that on this account he would treat me fairly well in public, so as to discredit the idea of a breach with Russia, which had been expected earlier, and had somewhat alarmed public opinion.

The Emperor was at Saint-Cloud.<sup>1</sup> By eleven o'clock I was there. His Majesty received me coldly, and at once began heatedly to enumerate his imaginary grievances against the Tsar Alexander, but without reproaching me personally. He spoke of the ukase prohibiting foreign imports,<sup>2</sup> and of the admission of neutral and American ships into Russian ports, which, he said, was an infringement of the Continental System. He went on to say that the Tsar was treacherous, that he was arming to make war on France, that troops from Moldavia were on their way to the Dwina. The Emperor repeated all the falsehoods, all the fantastic stories, which were fabricated in Danzig, in the Duchy of Warsaw, and even in the North of Germany, to please him, the falsity of which had been proved time and again, sometimes by means of investigations carried out on the spot, sometimes even by the march of events.

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon, returning from his visit to Cherbourg, had arrived at Saint-Cloud on the previous day, June 4, 1811, at one o'clock in the afternoon.

<sup>2</sup> The ukase of December 31, 1810, which prohibited the entry of foreign merchandise and silks, was intended to remedy the falling rate of exchange brought about by the constant drain of capital abroad to pay for imported goods, Russia being unable to export anything herself. It was also intended to encourage the development of home industries. (*Note by M. de Caulaincourt.*) Cf. *Rélations* by the Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovitch, V, 267; Caulaincourt to Champagny, January 15, 1811.

I replied to all this by facts which he had already read in my despatches, wherein they were set forth—facts going to show that the ukase was a consequence of the falling exchange rate; that it was impossible to import goods from outside when there was no possibility of exporting, since thereby the country lost all its specie, and that the sudden prohibition in Germany, as well as in France, of the entry of goods formerly imported from Russia had contributed not a little to bring about this state of affairs. As to the admission of neutral shipping, I repeated what His Majesty knew as well as I did; namely, that his sale of licences,<sup>1</sup> and the way in which, during the last eighteen months, English ships coming directly from England had been allowed openly to enter our ports, had opened everyone's eyes, and that it was not to be expected that the Government and population of a country like Russia, which had so greatly suffered through inability to export its products, would remain blind to such facts.

I went on to point out that public credit had felt the effects of all this to such an extent that the rouble, which was worth 2 fr. 90 when I first arrived in Petersburg, had fallen to 1 fr. 50; that commercial restrictions were keenly felt in a country unable to consume its own produce, this being chiefly basic commodities whose bulk made it in any case difficult to export; that, since the population was accustomed to being provided with colonial goods, notably sugar, the Tsar, even if he had so wished, would have been unable to enforce an absolute

<sup>1</sup> The system whereby the Government sold licences to commercial houses was authorized by the Emperor during the year 1810. (*Caulaincourt's note.*) Regarding this question of licences, see Thiers, XII, 192: "Henceforth every vessel sailing on the high seas or the Mediterranean was bound, in order not to be liable to seizure by our privateers, to take out a licence stating whence she had come, the places at which she had touched, and the nature of her cargo, whether on her outward or homeward journey. A vessel was allowed, if she concealed her nationality, to go even to England, in spite of the Berlin and Milan decrees, provided she carried away French produce and brought back certain specified merchandise." Cf. *Rélations* by the Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhalovitch, V, 4; Caulaincourt to Champagny, May 27, 1810.

prohibition (which would have driven up the prices of such goods to exorbitant levels and encouraged smuggling), when everyone knew perfectly well that for a long time past we had not enforced it ourselves, since our licences had even reached the ports of Russia, there to mock the embarrassments and losses suffered by the trade of that country. I reminded him of the affair of the *William-Gustave* of Bordeaux,<sup>1</sup> and that he had given none of the financial or other help which he had promised; that the fifteen millions which were to have been spent on naval armaments,<sup>2</sup> and which he had instructed me to announce, had not been provided. I further pointed out that the correspondence files would show all the measures of which he now complained to have been foreseen long before, and that he had done nothing to anticipate them; that from the first the Tsar Alexander had described our confiscation of all neutral cargoes as a veiled monopoly, and had declared that *he would not ruin his subjects to enrich his exchequer*. Moreover, I observed, it was not true, as His Majesty suggested,

<sup>1</sup> The *William-Gustave*, belonging to a Bordeaux shipowner M. Guillot, arrived in Russia at the beginning of 1810 flying a neutral flag. Previously the vessel had gone directly from Bordeaux to England, and it was reasonable to conclude, therefore, that her cargo belonged to the London house of Favenne, and not to Guillot. On the strength of the continental blockade this ship was sequestered by the Russian authorities. It appeared, however, that her cargo included certain French goods; and the *William-Gustave* was able to produce a French licence. Following out instructions sent by Champagny on February 10, 1810, Caulaincourt obtained the restitution of the ship in October 1810. "The Emperor," the Duke of Vicenza said, "did me the honour to inform me that this vessel was on the evidence liable to confiscation; that, seeking to maintain the policy adopted against England, he had not been able to allow any exceptions for fear of opening the door to abuses; that the sequestration of the *William-Gustave* had had no other purpose than this; but that, since the condemnation of the other vessels concerned had been irrevocably pronounced, he was happy to make an exception in the case of a French owner on account of his being provided with a licence from the Emperor." See Caulaincourt's letters to Champagny, March 26, 1810, October 23, 1810; to Napoleon, November 28, 1810; to Champagny, March 21, 1811.

<sup>2</sup> Convention of January 24, 1808 (Martens, XIV, 37).

that neutral vessels were secretly admitted, since, after having confiscated the cargoes of more than sixty which had touched at England, the Russian Government had given out an advance warning that in consequence of changes which we had instituted for some time past in the working of the system—a system, be it noted, jointly adopted, and still observed by Russia—it had been decided to admit neutral vessels which, after rigorous examination, could prove that they really were neutral and had not touched at England. I gave instances of numerous cases in which cargoes had been confiscated because the ship carrying them had done no more than put in at an English port; and I spoke of the effect produced by our newspapers announcing the admission into our ports of licensed vessels coming from England.

In regard to the character of the Tsar Alexander, I reminded him of how King Joseph had been officially recognized by Russia just when our affairs in Spain were going badly, and when the Tsar knew him to be in danger;<sup>1</sup> in regard to the transference of troops from Moldavia, I told him of the proposal made by the Tsar Alexander to M. de Lauriston to send his aide-de-camp right along the Turkish line, starting at Kiev itself, in order to convince himself that each of the regiments reported to have been sent to the Duchy of Warsaw<sup>2</sup> was, in fact, in its place; in regard to other movements of troops, I begged His Majesty to take account of that part of my correspondence which described them in detail. I explained how the Tsar Alexander, while he complained to me about the movements of our troops, would often tell me himself of the counter-movements he was making with his own, adding, "I do nothing in secret. I am not transferring troops to my frontiers; but I am taking steps to be able to withstand a possible surprise attack, to which the movement of French troops, three hundred leagues in advance of the main French army, lay me open."

I reminded the Emperor of the manner in which he had

<sup>1</sup> Russia had recognized Joseph as King of Spain as early as July, 1808.

<sup>2</sup> See letter from Lauriston to Maret, May 29, 1811.

concluded the last peace with Austria, and his scant regard for the feelings of Russia.

"I gave her 300,000 souls.<sup>1</sup> It's more than she gained on her own account!"

"True, Sire! But in such a case a more careful consideration of the form in which your policy was carried out would have safeguarded its substance. Your Majesty would have been better advised to give nothing at all."

I spoke to him of the effect inevitably produced by his refusal to ratify the Polish Convention<sup>2</sup> in view of the fact that

<sup>1</sup> An article in the Treaty of Vienna of October 14, 1809, said: "H.M. the Emperor of Austria cedes, and unequivocally yields up, to H.M. the Emperor of Russia a territory with a population of 400,000 souls in the most eastern part of ancient Galicia, the town of Brody not being included therein. The boundaries of this territory will be fixed by friendly agreement between representatives of the two countries" (*Le Clercq, Recueil des Traités de la France*. Paris: Amyot, 1864, II, 295). Regarding the Tsar's dissatisfaction in consequence of the concessions made to the Duchy of Warsaw, see Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I* II, 167.

<sup>2</sup> After the peace with Austria, the Emperor, thinking that certain demonstrations in Poland, and certain unrestrained articles in the newspapers, might understandably have made Russia uneasy about his policy in regard to Poland, offered the Petersburg Government a convention making clear to the Poles that he had no intention of re-establishing their kingdom. He announced his intention to make, in this respect, any formal statements that might be thought necessary to dismiss once and for all the very idea of such a re-establishment; and when the Convention had been signed, the Emperor refused to ratify it. He proposed a different wording, which, as Count Rumiantsof pointed out, being confined to generalities, did not at all meet the case. The same Minister added that it would be better for the sake of the alliance to let the whole matter drop. (*Caulaincourt's note*.)

Regarding this proposal, see Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, II, 169, 184, 221, 280. The Convention had been signed by Caulaincourt and Rumiantsof at Petersburg, January 4, 1810. Article 1 said: "The Kingdom of Poland will never be re-established." The Emperor Napoleon, along with his refusal to ratify this text, sent, on February 10, a counter-project to Caulaincourt, in which this Article had been replaced by another beginning as follows: "The Emperor Napoleon promises not to favour any undertaking aiming at a re-establishment of the Kingdom of Poland."

the Convention had resulted from an offer made by him and instructions he had given me. I spoke to him of his openly sending armaments to the Duchy of Warsaw, the fact being announced in our newspapers; of the Oldenburg affair; of his meetings; of his changed policy in Germany (this, too, publicly announced); of the letters which the Ministry sent through the post, their tone was more provocative than cannon-balls; of the crowd of indiscreet agents sent out in every direction to stir up trouble. Finally, I told the Emperor frankly that, if he wanted a war, his Government was doing everything it could to bring one about; it was even crying its purpose from the house-tops, and if he regarded the Russian alliance as worth maintaining, I was unable to understand what purpose all these pin-pricks could possibly serve.

The Emperor was extremely annoyed with me, and told me that I had been duped by the Tsar Alexander and the Russians, that I didn't understand what was going on; that Marshal Davout was better informed than I was;<sup>1</sup> that General Rapp kept him with a clearer idea of the course of events,<sup>2</sup> and so on. . . .

I replied that others were quite at liberty to fan the flames by repeating the absurd stories of certain petty agents anxious to earn their pay, but that, for my own part, I was confident of the correctness of my written despatches and of what I had had the honour of repeating to him; indeed, I was prepared to *answer with my person and my life* if M. de Lauriston, and the course of events, did not bear out all that I had written and said to him.

I do not know if my certainty gave the Emperor matter for serious reflection; but for at least a quarter of an hour he kept silent, pacing up and down his study without saying a word.

<sup>1</sup> Davout, commander-in-chief of the army in Germany since January 1, 1810, had been appointed Governor-General of Hamburg on December 1, 1810. He had taken up this post on February 9, 1811.

<sup>2</sup> Rapp had been appointed Governor of Danzig on June 2, 1807, and had taken up this post, after the Wagram campaign and a stay in France, on June 10, 1810.

The silence was broken at last by his saying: "You believe, then, that Russia does not want war, and that she would remain in the alliance and take steps to uphold the Continental System if I satisfied her in regard to Poland?"

"It is not only a matter of Poland," I replied. "But I am confident, Sire, that all would be well if Your Majesty would withdraw from Danzig and Prussia the greater part of the forces whose concentration there is believed to menace Russia."

"The Russians are afraid, then?" the Emperor said.

"No, Sire. But, being reasonable people, they prefer an open state of war to a situation which is not a genuine peace."

"So they think they can dictate to me?"

"No, Sire."

"Nevertheless, if they insist on my evacuating Danzig just to gratify Alexander, that amounts to dictation."

"The Emperor Alexander specifies nothing, doubtless in order not to create the impression that he is issuing threats; he simply describes what has happened since Tilsit, and holds that the placing of Your Majesty's army three hundred leagues in advance of your frontiers is incompatible with the spirit and maintenance of the alliance. I have been able to observe the causes of his perturbation, and have therefore been able to tell Your Majesty what would suffice to set his doubts at rest."

"Before long I shall be in the position of having to ask Alexander's leave to hold a parade at Mayence!"

"No, Sire; but parades at Danzig gall him."

"I offered him an exchange for Oldenburg; he spurned it. I offered to arrange matters in regard to the Duchy of Oldenburg; he would not hear of it."

"Your Majesty had just expelled the Duke of Oldenburg, a relative of the Emperor's, from his Duchy, and at a time when the marriage between his son and the Emperor's sister was taking place.<sup>1</sup> Could he, in such circumstances, be expected to act as Your Majesty's *préfet* at Erfurt?<sup>2</sup> Was not

<sup>1</sup> Oldenburg had been in effect annexed by France on February 18, 1811.

<sup>2</sup> It will be remembered that Napoleon had offered the regent of Oldenburg Erfurt in exchange for his Duchy.

such a proposal calculated to offend against all the proprieties, and in itself to constitute a new source of permanent difficulties between the two Courts. Your Majesty cannot have failed to realize that it would have been more prudent, as well as more seemly, to refrain from making it."

"The Russians are very proud nowadays."

"My duty, in this case, is to argue against Your Majesty. I neither approve nor blame; I report facts. Later on, Your Majesty will be able to judge whether all these grievances, even if they were well-founded, would be sufficient cause for you to sacrifice the advantages of the alliance."

"They want to make war on me, I tell you."

"The circumspection with which explanations have been made proves that they want neither to make war on, nor to dictate terms to, Your Majesty; at the same time, everything has persuaded me that they would not tamely allow you to occupy their country."

"The Russians want to force me to evacuate Danzig. They believe they can lead me on a string like their King of Poland. I am not Louis XV. The French people would not tolerate such a humiliation."

Since, I made no reply, the Emperor repeated several times, and with indignation, that *the French people would not tolerate such a humiliation, and that he was not Louis XV.* Then came a lengthy silence.

He broke it by saying:

"So you would like to humiliate me?"

"I would not wish Your Majesty to be humiliated, any more than I would wish France to be humiliated," I replied. "You ask me to indicate the means whereby the alliance and good relations with Russia might be maintained. I have indicated them."

"Do you advise me to suffer this humiliation?"

"Yes, Sire—that is, resume the position you took up after Erfurt. I see no humiliation in that, if Your Majesty wishes to maintain peace and the alliance. If you believe in the re-establishment of Poland as a political unit to be more to your interest, discussion is pointless, as also are my remarks; for such

a policy is incompatible with an alliance with Russia. In that case, quite a different line of argument has to be applied, in regard to which my opinion is without value."

"I have told you before that I have no wish to re-establish Poland."

"Then I do not understand for what Your Majesty has sacrificed your alliance with Russia."

"It is Russia who broke the alliance because she was embarrassed by the Continental System."

"This is quite a different question. I cannot give an unprejudiced opinion, but Your Majesty knows quite well that the System was still being fully observed at Petersburg, and that there we were still thinking in terms of Tilsit, six months after French ships provided with licences were returning with cargoes from England."

The Emperor smiled and pinched my ear, saying to me as he did so: "And are you really so fond of Alexander?"

"No, Sire; but I am fond of peace."

"I, too," the Emperor replied. "But I won't have the Russians ordering me to evacuate Danzig."

"They never spoke of it in such a way. 'The Emperor Napoleon,' the Tsar said to me when I took leave of him, 'knows everything that has harmed the alliance, everything that disturbs Europe, everything that menaces, even directly threatens, his ally. He will understand better than anyone else, assuming that the alliance is still useful to him, everything that is necessary to maintain it. The present state of affairs cannot continue, because the alliance must be useful to both parties, whereas, since your troops have been on my frontiers, it has been for me alone to keep the peace. If I have not hitherto demanded explanations about all that has happened, it is because I hoped that the Emperor Napoleon would come to see more clearly what were his real interests, and again adopt a policy more compatible with the alliance that has united us. If it turns out that this alliance does not lead to England making peace, and, in consequence, to safeguarding the general peace, I shall know what to do.'"

"This kind of reasoning deceives you because it is all

wrapped up in cajoleries ; but I'm too old a hand to be duped. I know the tricks of the trade too well."

"And I—if Your Majesty will allow me to make one more observation . . ."

"Go on," the Emperor said sharply.

"For my part, Sire, if I may take the liberty of repeating myself to Your Majesty, I see only two possible lines of conduct; to re-establish Poland and proclaim her independence, thus getting the Poles on your side and securing certain political advantages; or to maintain the Russian alliance, thus bringing about peace with England and settling your affairs in Spain."

"Which would you take?"

"Maintenance of the alliance, Sire. It is the more prudent course, and the one more likely to lead to peace."

"You are always talking about peace. Peace is only worth having when it is lasting and honourable. I do not want a peace which ruins my trade, as the Peace of Amiens did. For peace to be practicable and lasting, England has got to be convinced that she can count on no help from the Continent. Therefore, there must be no question of the Russian colossus and its hordes being able to threaten the South with invasion."

"Your Majesty, then, inclines towards Poland? In that case, you owe it to yourself and to your great objective to adopt a quite different tone. While the project has been under preparation you have had time to reflect on it. It is a bold undertaking to take the offensive with the Spanish and English wars already on your hands."

"I don't want war, and I do not want Poland," the Emperor answered quickly, as if afraid of letting the argument sink in. "But I want an alliance to serve my ends; and it hasn't served them since neutral ships were allowed to enter Russian ports. In fact, it has never served my ends. It was only with the greatest difficulty that the Russians could be persuaded to march against Austria in the Austrian war."

"The important thing from the point of view of Your Majesty is that they did march and did fight and this, when you consider that I was asking them to defend Warsaw and the Poles, their enemies, was a great deal. Politically, their

help was well worth having; and the proof is that Austria made peace."

"So long as the Emperor Alexander allows neutral ships in Russian ports the Continental System can have no reality."

"Your Majesty cannot expect to impose on the Russians, as on the people of Hamburg, privations that you no longer impose on yourself. If you wish to reintroduce the full Continental System as at first accepted, I have no doubt that the Russians will agree; if you allow modifications in the case of France, the Russians, in view of their position, have no alternative but to follow suit, and there is nothing for it but to tolerate their doing so."

The Emperor reverted to the successive points already discussed. Being unable to escape the facts, he tried to minimize or to deny them. Others he put down to my supposed credulity. They were a consequence, he said, of the Tsar Alexander's cajoleries. At one point, when I was quite temperately praising the character of that Prince, he said impatiently, "If certain ladies in Paris heard you, they'd dote even more on the Tsar Alexander than they do already. The tales of his charming manners and his gallantry at Erfurt turned their heads. It would all make a nice story for the Parisians."

I made no reply.

The Emperor's irritation, although repressed, was obvious. I felt that I had made some impression on him; and, thinking that this was my only chance to influence him by making certain observations which I thought important, I continued to talk with the same frankness.

Coming back to the Polish Convention, the Emperor said: "The dispute turned on the wording of the Convention. I only wanted to change its form."

I replied that it would have been better to reject the Convention out of hand than to propose changes which made it only too obvious that, from being prepared to secure Russia against the re-establishment of Poland, French policy had changed in the interval between one courier and another, and that other projects were afoot.

"Alexander affected pride. He did not want the Conven-

tion. The refusal came from his side," the Emperor went on. "He now finds the Convention pointless: am I to take it that he no longer credits me with the intention of going to war to re-establish Poland?"

"He is not sure," I replied, "whether the war will be for the Poles, or for Your Majesty; but he is not blind to the preparations you have made."

"He is afraid of me?"

"No, Sire, because, while recognizing your military talent, he has often pointed out to me that his country was large; that, though your genius would give you many advantages over his generals, even if no occasion arose to fight you in advantageous circumstances, there was plenty of margin for ceding you territory, and that to separate you from France and from your resources would be, in itself, a means of successfully fighting you. They realize in Russia the impossibility of attacking where Your Majesty is; but, since you cannot be everywhere, they do not hide their intention of attacking only where Your Majesty is not. 'It will not be a one-day war,' the Tsar Alexander said. Your Majesty will be obliged to return to France, and then every advantage will be with the Russians; then the winter, the cruel climate, and, most important of all, the Tsar's determination and avowed intention to prolong the struggle, and not, like so many other monarchs, to have the weakness to sign a peace treaty in his capital. . . . These are the very words, the thoughts of the Tsar Alexander which I quoted to Your Majesty. Since Your Majesty's policy has become more threatening, so that it looks as if matters will be pushed to the limit, he has made no attempt to hide either his opinions or his intentions."

"Admit frankly," said the Emperor Napoleon, "that it is Alexander who wants to make war on me."

"No, Sire," I replied once again; "I would stake my life on his not firing the first shot or being the first to cross his frontiers."

"We're agreed, then," the Emperor went on; "because I have no intention of going into Russia, nor any wish for a war or the re-establishment of Poland."

"Then, Sire, you ought to explain your intentions, so that everyone may know why Your Majesty's troops are concentrated in Danzig and the north of Prussia."

The Emperor made no answer to this. He spoke of the Russian nobles who, in the event of a war, would fear for their palaces, and, after a good battle, would force the Tsar Alexander to conclude a peace.

"Your Majesty is mistaken," I replied, and repeated to the Emperor words used by the Tsar which had greatly impressed me in the course of certain private conversations I had with him after the arrival of M. de Lauriston, when my position no longer had any political significance; words which were merely a more emphatic expression of what he had led me to understand some time before. They impressed me so much that I noted them down on returning home, and quote them here with the certainty that, to the best of my knowledge, my recollection of them was substantially correct:—

"If the Emperor Napoleon makes war on me," the Tsar Alexander said to me, "it is possible, even probable, that we shall be defeated, assuming that we fight. But that will not mean that he can dictate a peace. The Spaniards have often been defeated; and they are not beaten, nor have they submitted. But they are not so far away from Paris as we are, and have neither our climate nor our resources to help them. We shall take no risks. We have plenty of room; and our standing army is well organized, which means, as the Emperor Napoleon has admitted, that we need never accept a dictated peace, whatever reverses we may suffer. What is more, in such circumstances the victor is forced to accept the terms of the vanquished. The Emperor Napoleon made a remark to this effect to Tchernychev<sup>1</sup> in Vienna after the battle of Wagram. He would not have made peace then if Austria

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Ivanovitch Tchernychev, born in 1779, colonel in the Russian Guards, was the Emperor Alexander's aide-de-camp. He was present at the Battle of Wagram, and stood beside Napoleon, who decorated him with the Legion of Honour. He was entrusted with various missions between 1809 and 1812. Tchernychev was Minister for War in 1828, and died at Castellamare on June 20, 1857.

had not kept an army intact. Results have to keep pace with his thoughts, because, being often absent from France, he is always anxious to return there. This is the teaching of a Master. I shall not be the first to draw my sword, but I shall be the last to sheath it. The Spaniards have proved that lack of perseverance has been the undoing of all the States on which your master has made war. The Emperor Napoleon's remark to Tchernychev, in the latest war with Austria, shows clearly enough that the Austrians could have obtained better terms if they had been more persevering. People don't know how to suffer. If the fighting went against me, I should retire to Kamtchatka rather than cede provinces and sign treaties in my capital, that were really only truces. Your Frenchman is brave; but long privations and a bad climate wear him down and discourage him. Our climate, our winter, will fight on our side. With you, marvels only take place where the Emperor is in personal attendance; and he cannot be everywhere, he cannot be absent from Paris year after year."

The Emperor listened to me with the closest attention, even with some astonishment. He appeared to be greatly pre-occupied, and kept silent for a while. I thought I had made a deep impression on him, since his face, his whole bearing, which hitherto manifested only an extreme severity, became open and friendly. He seemed to wish to encourage me to go on, not only by looks, but by the questions he put. He spoke of society in Russia, of the army, of the administration, and even referred to the Tsar Alexander without manifesting his usual ill-humour at mention of this name. In fact, the Emperor gave every indication at this moment of being kindly disposed towards me, and referred appreciatively to the manner in which I had served him. I assured him that he was mistaken about the Tsar Alexander and about Russia; and it was of the utmost importance not to base his conclusions about that country on what certain persons told him, or about the army on what he had seen at Friedland; that, having been threatened for a year, it had been possible for the Russians to take account of all eventualities, particularly

to take account of the possibility of our enjoying immediate successes.

After listening to me attentively, the Emperor began enumerating the troops and general resources at his disposal. When he reverted to this theme I realized that all hope of peace was at an end, since it was enumerations of this kind which, more than anything, intoxicated him. Indeed he ended by telling me that one good battle would knock the bottom out of my friend Alexander's fine resolutions; not to mention his sand fortifications—alluding to the defence works which were being thrown up along the banks of the Dwina and at Riga.

He spoke of the situation in Spain, and referred with pique to his generals there and the set-backs they had suffered expressing his opinion that this vexatious state of affairs was due to the incompetence of the King, his brother, and of the French generals, and announcing his determination to make an end of it. He tried to persuade me that he could do this whenever he was so minded, but that the English would then attack elsewhere, perhaps even in France. Thus, he concluded, it was just as well—perhaps a positive advantage—for them to be in Portugal. Then he returned to the Tsar Alexander.

"He is fickle and feeble," he said once again.

"He is obstinate," I replied. "His conciliatory nature makes him give way easily when he does not feel the issues at stake to be particularly important; but at the same time he marks out a circle beyond which there is no making him yield."

"He has the Greek character—he is untrustworthy," the Emperor repeated yet again.

"I would not suggest," I said, "that he has always spoken everything that was in his mind; but whatever he has deigned to say to me has proved correct, and whatever promises he has made to Your Majesty through me he has kept."

"Alexander is ambitious. There is some hidden purpose which he hopes to achieve through war. He wants war, I tell you. Otherwise, why should he refuse every arrangement

I put forward? He has some secret purpose. Have you not been able to detect it? No, he has larger motives than Poland and Oldenburg."

"These motives, and the fact that your army is at Danzig, are in themselves enough to explain the line he has taken; though naturally, like every government in Europe, he is uneasy about the change Your Majesty has made in your policy since Tilsit, and, more particularly, since the Peace of Vienna."

"What has all that to do with Alexander? It does not affect him. Have I not told him to take Finland, Wallachia and Moldavia? Have I not suggested that he should partition Turkey? Did I not give him 300 millions for the Austrian war?"

"Yes, Sire; but you would not expect such enticements to blind him to the fact that Your Majesty has since then marked out a quite new policy, whose execution begins in Poland—that is, in Russian territory."

"Like him, you are simply dreaming! Once more—I do not want to go to war with him; but he must fulfil the commitments which he has undertaken, and enforce an embargo on English trade. What has he to fear from changes in my policy? What do such changes matter to a country like Russia, away at the back of beyond?"

"On that point he has never explained himself to me."

"I don't prevent him from extending his dominions in Asia, or even in Turkey, if he wants to, so long as he does not touch Constantinople. He is displeased that I should hold Holland.<sup>1</sup> That upsets him because he needs foreign loans."

"The reunion of the Hanseatic towns,<sup>2</sup> the establishment of the Grand-Duchy of Frankfort, which means that Your Majesty intends to keep Italy;<sup>3</sup> the giving of Hanover to

<sup>1</sup> After the abdication of King Louis, Napoleon annexed Holland by a decree of July 9, 1810.

<sup>2</sup> Senatus Consultum of December 13, 1810.

<sup>3</sup> The Grand Duchy of Frankfort was established in 1806 in favour of M. de Dalberg, Elector of Mayence. On March 1, 1810, Napoleon nominated Prince Eugène hereditary Grand-Duke of Frankfort, thus making it certain that he would inherit the Grand Duchy on the death of Dalberg.

Westphalia<sup>1</sup>—all these changes, brought about in times of peace, just peremptorily announced, alienate England and put obstacles in the way of making peace with her. Therefore they conflict with Russia's best interests. Even so, it will not be on that account that she goes to war."

"And must I be dictated to by the English and by my brother<sup>2</sup> just to please Alexander? Rumiantsof knows quite well that, before taking these steps, I did everything in my power to induce England to make peace. Labouchère has been to London several times, even to speak for the Dutch.<sup>3</sup> Am I to allow the north of Germany to be flooded with English goods?"

"As provisional measures, these steps would have seemed advisable; but they are not provisional, and instead of a few battalions to garrison Customs offices, a whole army is marching northwards; so they have aroused apprehension."

"You see no further than Alexander; he, after all, is just afraid. The policy you complain of is what has taken all the heart out of the English, and will force them to make peace."

This conversation continued for some time longer. The Emperor jumped from one question to another, and, at long intervals, returned to the same questions, no doubt to see if I kept to the same answers. To judge from his air of pre-occupation, and from the long silences which broke up our five hours of conversation, it looked as if he were giving more serious consideration to the matters under discussion than perhaps he had ever given them before. After one of these long silences, he said, "It is the Austrian marriage which has

<sup>1</sup> In 1806, Napoleon gave Hanover to Prussia in exchange for Anspach, Cleves and Neuchâtel. By the terms of the treaty of January 14, 1810 it was ceded to Jerome, with the exception of 15,000 inhabitants.

<sup>2</sup> King Louis of Holland.

<sup>3</sup> M. Labouchère, head of the house of Hope, partner and son-in-law of the English banker Baring, went to London on February 6, 1810, and had several interviews with the Marquis of Wellesley. Regarding these negotiations, see Albert Sorci, VI, 422, and *Documents historiques et réflexions sur le gouvernement de la Hollande*, by Louis Bonaparte, ex-King of Holland, III, 199.

set us at variance. The Tsar Alexander was angry because I did not marry his sister."

I took the liberty of reminding the Emperor that, as I had formerly reported to him, Russia was not at all eager for such a marriage; that, although the Emperor had not been able to refuse, without promising anything, to lend himself to the project, he would never have given way on the question of religion; that in any case there would have been a year's delay, even if the Tsar had been able to obtain his mother's consent;<sup>1</sup> in short, that he had not committed himself in regard to the matter, and that Russia was rather pleased than otherwise to learn of the unexpected Austrian marriage having taken place,<sup>2</sup> notwithstanding our somewhat unceremonious manner of going back on the proposals of our own making—proposals which, happily, had not been accepted, but which, had they been accepted,<sup>3</sup> would have made my position decidedly embarrassing.

"I have forgotten the details of the affair," the Emperor replied, "but Russia was certainly angry about our *rapprochement* with Austria."

I pointed out that in fact, as everyone had realized at the time, and as was proved by conversations with the Emperor and Count Rumiantsof when the first overtures in regard to this matter were made, the immediate reaction in Petersburg was an agreeable sense of relief at the removal of a very delicate question between the French and Russian Governments, and a still more delicate question between the Tsar and his mother and family.

<sup>1</sup> By the terms of a ukase of Paul I, Maria Feodorowna received the "power to dispose of her daughters; to arrange their future, and their establishment in the world. This gave her the legal right to oppose any marriage project" (A. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, 465).

<sup>2</sup> "Everyone's very satisfied here—the master and the rest of them" (Caulaincourt to Talleyrand, Petersburg, February 25, 1810).

<sup>3</sup> The correspondence between Caulaincourt and Champagny relating to the Russian marriage has been published by M. Pierre Bertrand in the *Correspondance*, June 10, 1810.

The Emperor Napoleon again repeated that he desired neither war nor the re-establishment of Poland, but that an understanding in the matter of neutral shipping and other differences was essential.

"If Your Majesty really desires an understanding, it will not be hard to bring one about," I said.

"Are you sure?" the Emperor asked.

"Quite sure," was my reply. "But reasonable proposals must be put forward."

"What proposals?" the Emperor said, and urged me to enumerate them.

"Your Majesty knows as well as I do, and has known for long enough, the causes of the present estrangement; and you know better than I do what you are prepared to do to remedy it."

"But what? What precisely is expected of me?"

"In regard to trade between the two countries, an arrangement should be made on a basis of reciprocal benefits, and a similar arrangement for merchant shipping in general. The admission of neutral ships into Russian ports should be countenanced, as long as we go on selling licences and allowing licensed vessels into French ports. The Prince of Oldenburg should be provided for in such a way that he is not, as at Erfurt, entirely dependent on you. Some arrangement should be made about Danzig, another about Prussia, etc., etc. . . ."

When the Emperor saw that I was touching on political matters, the discussion of which would force him to commit himself probably more than he wished to, he said that M. de Lauriston had been made responsible for the carrying out of this policy so far as such matters were concerned, and that I must be feeling the need for a holiday.

I begged His Majesty to let me say one thing more.

"Go on," the Emperor said.

"It is for you, Sire, to decide whether there is to be peace or war. May I beseech Your Majesty, when you make your choice between the certain good of the one and the hazards of the other, to take full account of your own welfare and of the welfare of France."

"You speak like a Russian," replied the Emperor.

"On the contrary, like a good Frenchman, like one of Your Majesty's most faithful servants."

"I repeat, I do not want war; but I cannot prevent the Poles from wanting me and expecting me. Davout and Rapp report that the Lithuanians are furious with the Russians, and that they are constantly sending delegates to them who urge us on, press us to make up our minds."

"You are being misled, Sire," was my reply.

I explained to the Emperor that, of the Governments which had partitioned Poland, the Russian Government was by its nature best suited to the Polish nobility; that they had been well treated by the Tsar Paul, and even better treated by Alexander; that I had met many landowners from Polish Russia, and had found that, while of course they regretted their lost national independence, they had little stomach for a new venture to recover it which might not, even if it succeeded, involve Poland's being reinstated as an independent Power; that the example of the Duchy of Warsaw, whose situation, from their point of view, was far from satisfactory, had not turned them in our favour as much as His Majesty thought; that the rivalries persisting between the great Polish families, no less than the natural instability of the Polish character, would always hinder their common action. I added that the Emperor ought not to shut his eyes to the fact that it was only too well understood in Europe nowadays that, when he concerned himself with the affairs of a country, it was to serve his own rather than its interests.

"You think so, do you?"

"Yes, Sire," I replied.

"You do not mince your words," he said jokingly. "It's time to go to dinner," he added, and withdrew.

Thus ended a conversation which had lasted for five hours and left me with no hope that peace would be maintained in Europe.

Later, I saw the Duke of Bassano again. He assured me, as the Emperor had done, that there was no question of wanting war; that Petersburg's fears were groundless, and that the

Emperor was not prepared now to reverse any of the measures he had thought it necessary to take.

Thenceforth, I had small hope of seeing the Emperor change his policy; nevertheless, I did not allow myself to be discouraged. The situation in Spain, bad though it was, might precipitate events which would induce a different political outlook. For two months past the tendency had been to carry on less agitation amongst the Poles, and to restrain the activities of generals and secret agents in Germany. The Emperor's views remained, I think, the same; but the probability is that the course of events in Spain, and a realization of the probable consequences of his prospective policy and his vast undertaking, made him somewhat indecisive. Ostensibly, the Government's attitude was less aggressive, its object being to make the adoption of a pacific policy possible if developments made such a policy necessary, or if its wisdom became so apparent that the party favouring it triumphed. Meanwhile, military preparations were completed; and no real steps were taken to prevent the outbreak of war.

After my conversation with the Emperor, it was some considerable time before we had any private relations. My position was uncertain. In public he treated me well enough, for some time. I did not abate my protests against the exile of Madame de C—.<sup>1</sup> Though I worried him with letters and petitions, the Emperor avoided speaking to me personally about the matter. At last, however, he granted me an audience, and promised that she should be recalled, but without definitely authorizing her recall. I continued with my campaign, until, having been told by Duroc at my request that unless he kept this promise I should retire, His Majesty once more promised to allow Madame de C— to return, and even obligingly said that she should resume her duties at the Court,<sup>2</sup> which was more than I had ventured to ask for. But next day it was clear that the Emperor had tacitly put a price on this mark of his favour, because, when I refused his

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Canisy.

<sup>2</sup> As lady-in-waiting to the Empress Marie Louise.

request to tell Prince Kurakin<sup>1</sup> that in my opinion the Emperor had no intention of re-establishing Poland nor any wish to see it re-established, and that he stood by the alliance and was arming only because Russia had mobilized, his promise to recall Mme de C—— remained unfulfilled, despite the fact that His Majesty had twice invited me to dine with him, and for eight days treated me in such a way as to suggest that he held me in great favour. During this time he had several long conversations with me at Saint-Cloud, and once, after dinner, at Bagatelle.<sup>2</sup> In each case the conversation was about Russia.

The Emperor continued to assure me that he had no desire for war, and really had small regard for the Poles. "A trivial people," he said, "and a State difficult to shape to any useful purpose. If the King I give them does not happen to suit, everything will go badly. And it is difficult to make a good choice. My family gives me no help. They are all insanely ambitious, ruinously extravagant, and devoid of talent." For the rest, the remarks about Russian affairs in the course of my first audience with the Emperor on arriving in Paris, were more or less repeated.

The Emperor's real desire was for me to persuade Prince Kurakin that there had been a mutual misunderstanding; that both sides had become irritated without knowing exactly why; that he had no intention of attacking Russia, and only stood out for the upholding of the Continental System so far as it was directed against England, and that therefore a consideration of ways and means of upholding it, and an adjustment of existing difference, were necessary. But when I approached fundamentals, and began to discuss in detail the mutual concessions whereby this object might be realized, the Emperor

<sup>1</sup> Prince Alexander Borissovitch Kurakin (1752–1818), who had been Vice-Chancellor of Russia and signed the Peace of Tilsit, was Russian Ambassador in France from 1808. He continued in this post until 1812.

<sup>2</sup> This dinner, at which Berthier was present, took place on July 28, 1811. See *Journal des Débats* of 30 and 31 July, 1811, and P. Marmottan, *Bagatelle, pavillon de chasse sous l'Empire et la Restauration* in the *Bulletin de la Commission historique de Neuilly*, 1905.

changed the subject. Since it was clear enough that he had not really altered his plans, but had, at the most, merely postponed their execution, and that all he wanted of me was that I should allay Russia's suspicions so that he might gain time, I avoided becoming his intermediary, and begged the Emperor to entrust M. de Lauriston with any communications he might wish to make to the Russian Government. This suggestion greatly displeased him, and brought our conversation to a summary conclusion.

Henceforth the Emperor, besides persecuting my friends, inflicted on me every sort of vexation which he could inflict on a State official, even to the extent of withholding payments to which I was entitled. He let slip no occasion of making me feel the weight of his displeasure, and replied to my complaints about my financial claims by pleading ignorance of the matter. My renewed solicitation to the Emperor in regard to Madame de C—'s exile met with no success, no matter whether I broached it verbally, or by letter, or through the mediation of Duroc. Finally, I again raised the question of my retirement with the Grand Marshal.

"Less than ever is this the moment to take such a step," he said to me. "You will lose your friends and ruin yourself. Have patience, and things will straighten out. Just now the Emperor is annoyed with you; but he holds you in esteem; he is even fond of you. He takes great interest in Madame de C—. Things will straighten out, I tell you, if you do not lose your head and put yourself in the wrong. It is absurd of you to take the Russian business so much to heart. We can do nothing about it. Since you cannot hope to change the Emperor's plans, why irritate him? He has his point of view; he is aiming at some objective of which we know nothing. You can be certain that his policy is more far-seeing than ours. In short, I strongly advise you as a friend to postpone your plans for retirement."

He continued in this strain for a long time, pointing out to me again that too much insistence would lose me my friends and ruin myself to no avail. But discussing the same topic a

few days later, the Emperor gave him reason to hope for a definite change in the near future. Duroc, who brought me this good news, again made me promise to be patient, and pointed out that as a soldier I could not leave the service before peace was concluded. He repeated that the Emperor would come round in time; that he was bitter, but always spoke of me with esteem.

Realizing that I was achieving nothing by this means, I addressed myself officially to the Minister for Police,<sup>1</sup> who broached the question frankly with the Emperor, pointing out that there was no reason for continuing an act of severity which was making a bad impression, even from the political point of view. But he obtained no satisfaction on this occasion.

It was at this period, I think, that the Emperor summoned one of his Ministers to Saint-Cloud. After a few minutes of general business conversation, he said to him: "Let us go for a stroll." When they reached a place on the terrace whence it was possible to see anyone approaching, and where no one could overhear them, he went on, "There is something I want you to do of which I have not spoken to a soul—not even to any of my Ministers. In any case it has nothing to do with them. I have decided on a great expedition. I shall need horses and transport on a large scale. The men I shall get easily enough; but the difficulty is to prepare transport facilities. I shall need an immense amount of transport because I shall be starting from the Niemen, and I intend to act over large distances and in different directions. This is why I need your help, and secrecy."

The Minister remarked that the project would involve considerable expenditure; that he would carry out his part with despatch and all possible discretion; but he could not prevent people talking when they saw waggons being assembled, and so on and so forth.

The Emperor, replying sharply to his first remark, said: "Come to the Tuilleries the next time I go there. I'll show

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Rovigo.

you 400 millions in gold.<sup>1</sup> Do not let the question of expense check you. There will be no shrinking from necessities."

Continuing the talk, the Emperor elaborated his policy, which was based on the necessity of crushing England by crushing the only Continental Power still strong enough to give him any trouble by joining with her. He spoke of the usefulness of isolating the Russians from European affairs, and of establishing in Central Europe a State which should act as a barrier against invasions from the North, adding that the moment was opportune; that later there would be no time for such an expedition, and that it was essential to strike this last blow in order to achieve a general settlement, and years of peace and of prosperity for us and our children after all these years of weariness and discomfort, but years also of glory.

<sup>1</sup> Actually there were at this time about 380 millions in the cellars of the Tuileries. (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

The Minister of whom Caulaincourt speaks cannot be other than Lacuée de Cessac, who, being Minister of War from January 3, 1810, would have at his disposal all material, such as victuals, clothing, transport, hospitals.

## CHAPTER II

### *Before the Russian Campaign*

THE journey to Boulogne, along the coast and down through Holland, which followed the Emperor's round of visits to various palaces,<sup>1</sup> put an end for a while to the host of petty annoyances that plagued my life, taking us away, as it did, from Paris. But there was no alteration in the Emperor's acerbity towards me, even when the almost super-human achievements of my department occasionally drew his involuntary though grudging praise during these astonishing journeys and constantly improvised missions.

The Emperor set out for Compiègne on September 16th,<sup>2</sup> arrived at Boulogne on the 19th, Ostend on the 22nd,<sup>3</sup> Breskens on the 23rd, and went on board the *Charlemagne* on the 24th. At six o'clock in the evening a violent storm scattered the entire squadron and obliged him to remain on board until eight o'clock in the morning of the 27th. The Emperor then landed at Flushing. On the 28th he went to Middelburg, returning thence to Flushing, leaving at four o'clock next morning in a cutter to inspect the vanguard of the fleet and visit Terneuzen. From that place he went up the Scheldt to Antwerp, visiting Bath Forts on the way, and on

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor was in residence at Trianon from July 10 to July 23, 1811; at Rambouillet from August 6th to August 13th; at Paris from August 14th to August 15th. After returning to St. Cloud he went to Trianon on the 23rd, and reached Compiègne on August 29th.

<sup>2</sup> Caulaincourt is mistaken. The Emperor had been at Compiègne since August 29th, and did not leave until September 19th, when he started at half-past three in the morning, reaching Boulogne that same evening at eight o'clock.

<sup>3</sup> Napoleon arrived at Ostend at three o'clock in the morning of September 23rd.

reaching Antwerp<sup>1</sup> joined the Empress, who had come by Laeken.

The Emperor visited Willemstad and Helvetsluys on the 4th,<sup>2</sup> passed the night in the cutter off Hogplat, on the 5th saw Dordrecht, as well as some great rafts of floating timber, slept at Gorkum and reached Utrecht on the 6th. The 7th and 8th were spent in reviewing the infantry and cavalry on the heath three leagues outside the town,<sup>3</sup> and he also made an excursion to Amersfoort.

At two o'clock in the afternoon of the 9th he made his entry into Amsterdam. On the 15th he went to Helder, travelling partly in his carriage and partly on horseback. On the 16th he inspected the new forts<sup>4</sup> and the squadron and examined the Texel.

On the 17th he paid a visit to the land forts and the river channel, leaving at noon. He visited Alkmar and Haarlem, returning to Amsterdam at nine o'clock in the evening.

On the 21st he went to Muiden and Naarden. On the 24th he went back to Haarlem, took his midday lunch at Katwijk, saw the authorities at Leiden, passed through Scheveningen and slept at The Hague. On the 25th he inspected the foundry,<sup>5</sup> had luncheon at Delft, and reached Rotterdam at eleven o'clock. On the 26th there was a review at Utrecht,<sup>6</sup> and His Majesty passed the night at the castle of Loo.

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor reached Antwerp at one o'clock in the morning of the 30th. Marie Louise joined him at four o'clock in the afternoon.

<sup>2</sup> October.

<sup>3</sup> On the 7th, Napoleon reviewed the army corps of Marshal Oudinot, and on the 8th watched the manœuvring of the troops composing the camp at Utrecht.

<sup>4</sup> The Forts Morland and Lasalle, which commanded the mouth of the Scheldt.

<sup>5</sup> The ordnance foundry at The Hague.

<sup>6</sup> More exactly, between Amersdorf and Utrecht; the review was of the 24th Horse Chasseurs, and of the Spanish regiment of Joseph Napoleon.

On the 28th he went to Zwolle by way of Deventer, held a review,<sup>1</sup> and slept at Loo.

On the 29th he was at Nimuegen; the 30th at Wesel near Grave; on November 1st at Düsseldorf; the 5th at Cologne; the 6th at Bonn; the 7th at Juliers, sleeping at Liége; the 8th at Givet. Floods had carried away the bridge across the Meuse, which was not practicable until nine o'clock that evening. The night of the 10th was spent at Mézières; thence to Compiègne; and on the 11th we reached St. Cloud.<sup>2</sup>

The maze of details connected with these journeys had rendered me indispensable to the Emperor. Too just not to appreciate my work, he was nevertheless curt in his relations with me. Once back in Paris, things resumed their normal course. No longer distracted from his sense of grievance against his Master of the Horse, and as my various petitions on behalf of friends reminded him that he could vex and punish me in matters close to my heart, the Emperor seemed in no disposition to treat me better.

Engaged in a matter that touched my honour, in that it concerned my country, and my self-esteem in that I had no mind to be the agent of a policy of which I disapproved, I was in an embarrassing position; but my silence in public on all these questions was my salvation.

Bowing to the unjust severity of a sovereign, who can never give way to a subject, I refrained from my complaints regarding things that affected me personally, but I appealed direct to the Emperor, or through Duroc and the Duc de Rovigo, against the injustice dealt out to my friends, who were entirely ignorant of my political views. My silence in public and my restraint were noticed by the Emperor. According to what Duroc told me, he approved of my conduct, yet not for one moment did he modify his own.

During the winter there were many festivities, full-dress

<sup>1</sup> Of the troops from the camp at Groningen.

<sup>2</sup> On the 11th the Emperor and Empress reached Compiègne at half-past ten in the morning and set off again in the afternoon, reaching St. Cloud at six o'clock in the evening.

balls and masked balls. At the State ball<sup>1</sup> I was the only high official not included in the grand quadrille with the Empress and the princesses.<sup>2</sup> Hoping to pique me, the Emperor called for the Comte de Nansouty, who was not highly placed in the royal establishment.<sup>3</sup> I was likewise passed over, or rather I was the only high official not invited, at supper at the Empress's table. So far as the supper was concerned I took this rebuff lightly, for it was possible to consider invitations to that as a personal matter; but as the quadrille concerned one of the prerogatives of my position and was a matter of public observation, I considered it my duty to lodge a complaint. The Emperor sent me word that the omission of my name had been a mistake; but I learned from Duroc, to whom he had dictated the list, that it had been intentional.

Duroc even warned me, with that obliging friendliness which characterized him, not to mention for the moment the return of my friends to Court, adding that he did not know what I had done or said, but that the Emperor was more incensed against me than ever. He observed that I spoke too warmly against Polish affairs, that when the Emperor discussed business with me I gave the impression of blaming him, and that this irritated him. He was doubtless alluding to two conversations the Emperor had had with me; one at the castle of Loo, during our journey to Holland, and the other two days previously,<sup>4</sup> in Paris. I will confine myself to but a brief summary of them, for with the exception of a few phrases which I will record, the conversations were on the same lines, and in almost the same terms, as those already reported.

<sup>1</sup> February 6, 1812, in the Salle des Spectacles at the Tuilleries.

<sup>2</sup> In this quadrille the Empress had as her partner the Prince of Neuchâtel; Master of the Hunt; Queen Hortense, General Duroc, Grand Marshal of the Palace; Princess of Eckmühl, Prince Aldobrandini, principal equerry to the Empress; the Comtesse de Croix, the Comte de Nansouty.

<sup>3</sup> General Champion de Nansouty, equerry to the Emperor.

<sup>4</sup> That is, two days previous to his conversation with Duroc. The conversation at Loo must have taken place during the evening of October 27th or 28th.

"This journey," said the Emperor, "together with the measures I am going to take against English commerce, will prove to the Tsar Alexander that I remain staunch to the system of the alliance, and am more concerned with the internal prosperity of the Empire than with the warlike schemes attributed to me."

"In the meantime, the troops Your Majesty has assembled here are proceeding northwards. That does not seem to accord with the maintenance of peace."

"The Poles are calling me, but I am not thinking of that restoration, and although it would be politic and even in the interests of civilization, I am not thinking of it because the question of Austria would be too great a business."

"And yet, Sire, that is the only price I can imagine worth paying for the sacrifice of the alliance with Russia."

"I have no wish to sacrifice it. I am only occupying North Germany in order to strengthen the Continental System, and place England in a real quarantine in regard to Europe. To do this I must be strong everywhere. My brother Alexander is obstinate; he sees these measures as veiling some project of attack. He is wrong. Lauriston is constantly telling him so, but when a man is afraid he sees double, and at Petersburg they can see nothing but divisions on the march, armies standing in readiness, Poland in arms. It is I who might take offence, for the Russians have brought up the divisions which they previously brought from Asia."

After making many observations to prove to the Emperor that he could not deceive Petersburg regarding his real projects, I added that no political interest could justify a war that would take him eight hundred leagues from Paris whilst he had Spain and all the resources of England against him.

"It is because England is in Spain, and obliged to stay there, that she causes me no qualms. You understand nothing about affairs. You are just like the Russians; you can see nothing but threats, nothing but war, when this is just a disposition of forces necessary to make England sue for terms before six months have passed, so long as Rumiantsof does not lose his head."

The Emperor closed these conversations by a show of something more than impatience.

I returned to Duroc, who made me promise to see no more of Talleyrand, who, he told me, had been out of favour for some time with the Emperor for more reasons than one: notably on account of the reflections he had permitted himself to make regarding the war in Spain, notwithstanding that he had been among the first to urge the Emperor to seize that throne. Duroc added that we did not know the Emperor's wider projects nor his political views; he centred everything on the need of forcing England to make peace so that Europe might finally enjoy lasting tranquillity. All Duroc's reflections were made in a spirit of kindness and concern for myself.

The winter was coming on. Negotiations had already started with Austria for an offensive and defensive alliance to be imposed on Prussia.<sup>1</sup> In all directions greater exertions than ever were being made to further the arrangements and dispositions for the Emperor's great undertaking. We were approaching the denouement of the events for which the projected interview at Dresden was the intended prelude. In the meantime Paris and the Court were busy with parties and entertainments.

One evening, at a Court function, the Emperor came up to Prince Kurakin<sup>2</sup> near the throne. He had a long conversation with him, and spoke so loudly that those about His Majesty felt it their duty to retire somewhat. At the same moment I was chatting with someone<sup>3</sup> in the embrasure of a window. The Emperor was standing with his face towards me, to the left of the throne. All the despatches of the time have reported this conversation. The Emperor Napoleon complained that the Tsar Alexander wished to attack him, that he was no longer in the alliance, as he admitted pretended neutrals, that Russia was the scene of vast movements of troops. At the end of this conversation, which lasted for half an hour, the

<sup>1</sup> The negotiations were based upon the treaty with Prussia of February 24, 1812, and that with Austria of March 14, 1812.

<sup>2</sup> This scene took place at the Tuileries on August 15, 1811.

<sup>3</sup> Bessières, Duke of Istria.

Emperor exclaimed loudly enough for me to hear him from where I was standing:

“According to M. de Caulaincourt the Tsar Alexander wishes to attack me.”

The Emperor was so excited and spoke with such warmth, and his words came out with such rapidity, that Prince Kurakin, standing with his mouth open to reply, could not get a word in. Although they had withdrawn some distance, the bystanders were all ears, especially those members of the diplomatic corps who happened to be in the room.

“M. de Caulaincourt,” the Emperor went on, “has turned Russian. The Tsar’s blandishments have quite captured him.”

Leaving Prince Kurakin, the Emperor took a few steps towards the middle of the room, seeking to read in the bystanders’ eyes what impression he had made. Noticing me in the window—for I had certainly not escaped his attention—the Emperor came up to me and remarked peevishly:

“You have turned Russian, have you not?”

“I am a very good Frenchman, Sire,” I answered very firmly; “and time will prove that I have told Your Majesty the truth, as a faithful servant should.”

Seeing that I was taking the matter seriously, the Emperor then pretended that he had been joking.

“I know well enough that you are an honest man,” he said, “but the Tsar Alexander’s cajoleries have turned your head. In fact you have become a Russian,” he added, with a smile.

He then turned away and began to speak to other persons.

Next day, having failed to obtain a private audience with the Emperor, I made a formal declaration to Duroc, for him to pass on to His Majesty, that I wished to resign, and at the same time explained myself so forcibly to the Minister of Police that within twenty-four hours Madame de C——<sup>1</sup> had permission to return from exile.

On this point I must render the Duke of Rovigo the justice

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Canisy, who had been banished since the end of 1810, was permitted to return to Paris in August, 1811.

that many others beside myself owe him. He spoke frankly to the Emperor about this act of severity, as he did, indeed, about many similar affairs, seeking to delay action or even to bring about a reversal of his decision, without fearing the harsh and disagreeable consequences that he might bring on himself. Undoubtedly Duroc told the Emperor the truth more than any other Minister ventured to do.

I had spoken to Duroc with the tone of a man who has made up his mind, and he came to see me on the following morning. He told me that the Emperor had not meant to say anything distasteful to me; he had merely said to Prince Kurakin what he had subsequently said to me in order that the Tsar Alexander should know that I remained his friend; he valued me highly, but I ought to consider his susceptibilities more in some ways, and not fall out with him as I did when he discussed policy with me; it was easier to lead him by giving way on certain points than by directly opposing his views. He told me that I worried myself needlessly with matters which did not actually concern me, and by so doing harmed myself and my friends without benefit to policy or person; it was foolish to sacrifice oneself for high matters which one could in no way change, or when one had not armies to set up in opposition. It was a vain self-sacrifice. I tried unavailingly to explain my feelings to him. He was amused at what I called doing my duty. He let me see, however, that at heart he agreed with me, but that it would be a purposeless waste of his time and devotion even to hope to persuade the Emperor to other political views.

Towards the end of winter and in the spring<sup>1</sup> I had two further lengthy conversations with the Emperor, one of which took place very shortly after this explanation with Duroc. They turned on political questions. In the first, the Emperor tried once again to persuade me that he no longer contemplated the restoration of Poland, and had no wish whatever to go to war with Russia; in a word, that he only wanted to force England to abandon her groundless pretensions and make peace, and to accomplish this it was essential that Russia should

<sup>1</sup> Of 1812.

effectively close her ports to English commerce, whereas for a year past she had been receiving English goods brought in under the American flag.

To this I objected that we ourselves had been receiving goods by licences, a double duty collected, on the licence and on the goods.<sup>1</sup>

“Possibly so,” answered the Emperor, laughing. “I cannot go back on that, because of my maritime towns. Alexander has only to do the same himself. I would rather that Russia and its treasury should reap the profit than that it should go to so-called neutrals.”

He then returned to his old idea, that by impounding all neutral goods the Emperor Alexander would be doing immense good, etc.

The upshot of this conversation was a request that I should see Prince Kurakin and speak to him in that sense. I refused formally, and said openly to the Emperor that he knew I no longer saw any Russians nor had relations with any, wishing to say or do nothing that should run contrary either to my duty or to my opinions and conscience; that as these motives had made me cease all communications with them, and with other foreigners, I could not renew them for the purpose of saying something which I did not believe. I added, jokingly, that I was certain His Majesty would not himself desire me to play such a part. My refusal did not appear to change the Emperor’s good-humoured mood, for he seemed disposed to talk, and even invited me to do so.

“You may be sure,” he said, “that I have no intention of sacrificing such great interests for a speculative re-establishment of Poland.”

“Undoubtedly Your Majesty would not make war on Russia solely for the sake of Poland,” I answered; “but rather that you should have no rival in Europe, and see there none but vassals.”

<sup>1</sup> By the decree of August 5, 1810, colonial goods coming into France in the cargoes of licensed vessels or those flying a neutral flag were allowed to circulate freely on production of certificates of origin and payment of a tax of 50 per cent.

I added that this occupied him much more than his Continental System, which could have been put rigorously into force from Archangel to Danzig as soon as the Emperor frankly imposed upon himself those privations and mortifications which he wished to demand from others. I added further that it would doubtless have a great effect against England, but that as he wished to attain this end only by making others pay the price of sacrifice, and as he would not and could not beyond a certain point suffer detriment to his own purse, he preferred a war which he hoped would put him in a position to demand, as master, sacrifices which hitherto he had had to obtain by example and persuasion. Finally, I urged, he would not have gathered such forces in the North, to the detriment of the Spanish campaign, nor would have spent so much money in all sorts of preparations, if he had not been resolved to put them to some use, either for a political end or to satisfy his fondest passion.

"What passion is that?" asked the Emperor, laughing.  
"War, Sire."

He tweaked my ear, with weak protests that it was not so. He then gave me free leave to say whatever I desired, and accepted with the utmost good humour everything I said. When I made a point, he pinched my ear again, giving me a gentle tap on the nape of my neck, especially when I seemed to him to be going rather far.

I told him that his desire was, if not for universal monarchy, at least for a supremacy which should be more than *primus inter pares*, and should place him in the position of demanding from others sacrifices which he would not be called upon to make himself, and this without allowing them the right of complaint or even of comment. This could only appear of momentary advantage to France; it had already resulted, and in time to come would result yet more, in provoking hostile opinion, ill-feeling and jealousy, which sooner or later were bound to end tragically for us, as a situation of this kind could not be forced upon the nations in the present century. He laughed heartily at what he called my philanthropy, and at my remarks about *primus inter pares*. He was in the best of

humours, laughing very readily ; he took no offence, and made some faint efforts to convince me that I was mistaken. He had the air of saying, "You're quite right ; you've guessed correctly ; but don't say anything about it. . . ."

The Emperor was at pains only to try to prove that he had never made any but political wars, in the interests of France, giving me to understand that the projected war, which he continually assured me was not yet decided upon, would be even more a matter of politics, and that it was actually in the interests of Europe, etc.

He added that France could not remain a great Power and enjoy great commercial prosperity and the influence that went with it if England should preserve her own prosperity and maintain her usurpation of maritime rights, as he called her claims.

We discussed these points at length, touching also on my contention that the territories of France were already too far-flung, that all her gains beyond the Rhine could only prove a source of war and embarrassment for his son. His genius and his grandiose ideas embraced the whole world, I said ; but the common sense of the human race, the ordinary mental capacity of men had, like the reasonable geography of the States of Europe, certain limits beyond which the prudence and foresight of mankind should not venture.

The Emperor was amused at my moderation, and even ridiculed it, though at the same time he was pondering my remarks. I think so, at least ; for during this part of the conversation he was often pensive and silent, like a man impressed by the truth. Nay, at moments, his bearing, his tone, voice and expression were those of one who welcomed the freedom with which I was speaking, a frankness to which sovereigns are so little accustomed.

The Emperor sought to persuade me that peace with England would mark the term of his ambition, and of the love of war for which he was reproached, and which, indeed, was solely the result of political clear-sightedness. He would then show himself more moderate than anyone expected. I agreed as to the real interest he had in forcing England to

make peace, and as to the sacrifices needful to attain this end, but with this difference; that I thought it could be obtained by perseverance and the maintenance of peace on the Continent. I thought more lay in moderation and in a less threatening attitude on our part towards foreign Powers, while the Emperor could envisage nothing but the absolute submission of all those Powers to the measures he required. The harder the Emperor found it to persuade me, the more art and persistence he put forth to attain that end. His calculated wiles, and the language he used, would have made anyone believe that I was one of the powers whom he was so much concerned to win over.

I have often observed in him that care and persistence, and am far from flattering myself that I was the occasion of it. He acted so towards all whom he wished to persuade, and he was always wanting to persuade someone.

I enter into all these details because they delineate his character; that is my sole purpose. I will even add that this persistence arose, I think, from the habit that he had but too firmly contracted, whether by reason of his power or on account of the real superiority of his genius and the ascendancy that it gave him, of either communicating his conviction to others or of imposing it upon them. Certain it is that to the success which he was accustomed to obtain thus must be attributed his predilection for interviews with sovereigns, and his habit of dealing in any particularly delicate and important matters directly with the ministers and ambassadors of foreign Powers. When he so wished, there could be a power of persuasion and fascination in his voice, his expression, his very manner, giving him an advantage over his interlocuter as great as the superiority and flexibility of his mind. Never was there a man more fascinating when he chose to be; to withstand him one had to realize, as I did, the political errors which lay concealed beneath this art. However prepared for him I might be, even when on my defence, he was often for a moment on the point of winning me to his opinion, and I only broke the spell because, like all curt and obstinate people, I remained on my own ground, maintaining only my own ideas and not heeding

those of the Emperor. To avoid being carried away by the geniality which he often assumed when wishing to inspire confidence, to withstand the forceful arguments and reasoning of the Emperor, often specious but always clever and full of apt comparisons as useful to illustrate his own ideas as to conceal the end he wished to attain, one had to behave as if one did not understand what he was saying, and to repeat diligently to oneself in advance: "This is just; this is right; this only is in the interest of France, and therefore in the true interests of the Emperor." It was necessary to confine one's attention to the question as it appeared to oneself, and not to stray beyond the circle thus traced; above all, not to follow the Emperor in his digressions, for he never failed to shift the centre of argument when he encountered opposition. Woe to him who admitted a single modification, for the adroit interlocutor led from concession to concession to the end he had in view, casting up a previous concession against you if you defended yourself, and assuming that it consequently implied the point you refused to concede. No woman was ever more artful than he in making you want, or agree to, his own desire when he thought it was to his interest to persuade, or merely wanted to do so. These reflections call to my mind what he once said on a similar occasion, which explains better than any other phrase could have done the price he was ready to pay for success:

"When I need anyone," he said, "I don't make too fine a point about it; I would kiss his . . ."

Once he had an idea implanted in his head, the Emperor was carried away by his own illusion. He cherished it, caressed it, became obsessed with it; one might say he exuded it from all his pores. By what means, then, did he strive to convey this illusion to others? If he sought to fascinate you, he was already fascinated before you. Never have a man's reason and judgment been more misguided, more led astray, more the victim of his imagination and passion than the reason and judgment of the Emperor on certain questions. He spared neither pain, care nor trouble to arrive at his end, and this applied as much to little things as to great. He was, one might

say, totally given over to his object. He always applied all his means, all his faculties, all his attention on the action or discussion of the moment. Into everything he put passion. Hence the enormous advantage he had over his adversaries, for few people are entirely absorbed by one thought or one action at one moment. I hope I may be pardoned these reflections. I return to my conversation with the Emperor.

The Emperor's endeavours to prove to me that all his wars were for political purposes, that his only aim was peace with England, that all his projects were conformable to this and aimed at that goal, induced me to touch once more on the great political questions relative to the project of war which I attributed to him on behalf of Poland. I said that I understood as well as he did, and that I had written to him to that effect when he might have had Poland's restoration in mind, that if it was to form a great buffer State in the centre of Europe, Poland was not in herself sufficient; it would be necessary to fashion that Power on a proper scale, with boundaries, a situation and an organization which would ensure general respect. I added that I understood perfectly well the utility of such a power, and that in consequence I considered any means admissible which would lead to that end, if he had had no other wars on his hands. This arrangement, I continued, could not but be agreeable to the ideas of England and Austria, according to my views; the Tsar Alexander, although he could not publicly agree to this project on account of his Polish provinces, was a man who could appreciate the wise political scope of such an arrangement; interest and honour would prevent him from giving up his portion of Poland without a struggle, but this war, fought at some other time, and with the acquiescence of Europe, would soon be over, and if it were waged for that purpose, it must be made clear that such was its purpose, so that Europe would regard it only as a fight for security. But for this purpose, I said, it would first be necessary to return Oldenburg to its prince; to restore Germany's independence, to give Illyria to Austria in exchange for Galicia,<sup>1</sup> perhaps to

<sup>1</sup> By the Treaty of Vienna, 1809, Austria had ceded a part of Galicia to the Duchy of Warsaw.

detach Saxony from the Confederation, to permit Poland no longer to belong to the Confederation or be a tributary like the Duchy of Warsaw. It would be essential to make an authentic and positive declaration of his views and principles, and of the end he had in view, to make Austria disinterested by restoring her outlets to the sea—in short to refashion the State of Europe with reasonable boundaries, and thus make a situation which would promise a future to everyone and prove conclusively that he desired nothing but an honourable peace with England, a peace that should be in the interests of all. I added that it was essential to take a firm and definite attitude with regard to Prussia, and to come to an understanding with the Great Powers that the buffer State should be ruled by a dynasty neither French, Russian nor Austrian: in fine, that this State should be entirely independent as regards its organization as well as its dynasty; and it seemed to me that a question of this importance, and an arrangement of this nature, would induce England to make peace more than would the Continental System, as offering a tranquil future to all cabinets, and so setting an example of moderation, even of sacrifice. This step, I told him, would conciliate general feeling towards him; this great political move ought to be made openly; and if this really was his object, it seemed to me so sweeping, so noble, so well calculated to immortalize his reign, that he ought to proclaim it, announcing his intentions to the world at large, and leaving nothing vague or likely to cast doubts on his good faith in carrying them out. All the mysterious ways of our existing political system, I continued, all the pin-pricks that were given, ostensibly to make one's adversary explain his intentions, but really to force him into a corner and make him the aggressor, would become out of date and useless; that in such an event I should esteem myself happy to be the agent, the verbal go-between for such a project; and I was prepared to be the intermediary at Petersburg, however little the cabinet there might relish the message I took them.

I concluded by saying that such a purpose, worthy as it was of the Emperor's genius, was the only thing which could make the Polish war intelligible to me; otherwise it seemed quite

unreasonable, for a war in Russia, without a previous declaration of the freedom of Poland, without the loyal aid of Austria previously recompensed for the loss of Galicia by the cession of Illyria, without the secret assent of England, would be a very risky enterprise, presenting nothing but difficulties without any real advantage to compensate them; a hundred Russians slain beyond the Oder did not appear to me sufficient compensation for the death of a single Frenchman slain on the same field of battle, etc.

The Emperor listened to me with attention, but with occasional symptoms of impatience. I paused often, hoping that he would answer me, and that in touching on various details of this great question he would broach the matter. He answered only on the general lines of his previous remarks, adding ironically to his old refrain, "Austria ought to be delighted to hear what you say. In creating a kingdom for the King of Prussia, Alexander's friend, I should rouse too much laughter among the English. Don't you see that this would be playing their game?"

"I have not mentioned the King of Prussia," I answered. "The King of Saxony, or any other monarch, might rule this State. Who knows, in the arrangements for intervention, whether the Powers would not consent to have on the throne some prince of the Confederation or some other person agreeable to Your Majesty?"

Although my observations appeared to be little to the Emperor's taste, yet I reflected that I had already said too much to stop at that point, and that the Emperor would do well to realize that no one was hoodwinked by our policy. So I added:

"If your Majesty does not act on these lines, I ought to say frankly that everyone in Europe, as in France, will see that the war in Russia or Poland for which you are preparing is not in order to create a buffer State, as Your Majesty would have us believe, but for some purpose for which that is merely the pretext."

I added that over and above all this there would be no need to make this war against Russia if he foresaw nothing but the

difficulties of establishing this buffer State on a scale that should make it really independent.

The Emperor seemed a little piqued and said, as he invariably did when a matter was broached that displeased him: "I am not asking your advice."

Nevertheless he led the conversation round to the topic of Russia. He went into each question in detail, spoke of every grievance as though he were going over each step with his cabinet and seeking to explain himself and win agreement. Once again I repeated to His Majesty that in order to persuade the Tsar to make fresh commercial sacrifices, and to make him determined to await the desired satisfaction with regard to the Prince of Oldenburg, it seemed to me that it would be necessary to make a formal engagement to place North Germany in its old position, once peace were made. For the moment no licences should be granted, nor should the monopoly of the State, as the Tsar called it, be exercised at the expense of the subject, if the intention was that no more neutrals should be admitted.

I reminded him that these licences, given to our vessels to enable them to go to England, had made Russia decide to receive neutrals, and that the Tsar wished to see us accept the same privations that others suffered, and thus be assured of our future intentions.

As the Emperor still seemed anxious that I should see Prince Kurakin, I told him that I would not be a party to deceiving anyone, least of all the Tsar, by taking a step that would amount to trickery, for I no longer had any authority to speak of affairs. All these preparations would be a misfortune for France and a matter for regret and embarrassment to the Emperor himself, and I had no wish to give myself cause for reproach for having contributed to it. The Emperor turned his back on me, saying drily that I understood nothing about policy, and thereupon left me.

I continued to live in retirement, maintaining the utmost reserve. I saw no Russians, and even avoided meeting Prince Kurakin. More than a month had passed without my seeing any of them, when the Emperor had another conversation

with me, shortly before his departure. Once again he returned to his supposed grievances. This time his conversation seemed to show what was really in his mind. The Emperor could no longer make pretences about his plans for departure, but he still tried to persuade me that he neither wished to establish Poland nor to have any kind of war, but hoped that everything would be cleared up and arranged without coming to blows.

We used the same arguments on each side and talked from the same premises. I further urged all my beliefs as to the inconveniences, not to say the dangers of such a distant expedition which would keep him away from France so long. I spoke of how he was continually being reproached for running such risks, for gambling with such splendid and mighty destinies, when he could exercise a great and powerful influence from his desk in the Tuileries. I mentioned the effect in France of risks forced on the youth of the nation, no longer, as aforetime, confined exclusively to the lower orders of society. I represented to him how he had already been condemned in this connection for the War in Spain, and the danger of going far away before its termination. I told him that it was in Spain that he should first strike, if he persisted in his desire for this unfortunate war with Russia. I described the country to him, the climate, the advantage the enemy would have in allowing him to advance and wear himself out by marching without the chance to fight. I reminded him of the words of the Tsar which I had already reported. I also recalled to him the privations and discontent of the troops during his last campaign in Poland. To all my arguments his reply was that *I had turned a Russian, and that I understood nothing of affairs.*

“But if I understand nothing, Sire,” I retorted with a smile, “why does Your Majesty do me the honour of discussing affairs with me? I can do nothing in this matter except through love of my country and attachment to your person. Such noble sentiments cannot lead me into error and keep me in error so long. Your Majesty is not so gracious towards those who are not of your opinion that you can imagine that it is amusing to contradict you; indeed, such a course, so far

as my friends and myself are concerned, has not been so successful as to encourage me to continue it. It must therefore be a matter of conscience and conviction. Your Majesty is carried away by false reports. You are confused and deluded as to the dangers of the course you are taking. You think you are pushing forward to a great and politic objective, and and I am convinced that you are mistaken."

The Emperor replied with warmth that it was the Tsar of Russia who desired war; M. de Lauriston had informed him that all the Russian armies were on the march, even those from the Turkish frontier; the soft words of the Emperor Alexander had befogged me. He said that he had known of Russia's hostile intentions only when he sent another ambassador, who informed him by every courier that the English were trading openly in Petersburg, and that there had even been an attempt to rob M. de Longuerue,<sup>1</sup> the aide-de-camp, of the despatches which M. de Lauriston had forwarded to him.

The Emperor was doubtless unaware that I had seen young M. de Longuerue, and knew all about his adventure.

<sup>1</sup> Gabriel François de Hatte, Marquis de Longuerue, born at Vigan (Gard), April 17, 1778, died at Valence, October 6, 1852. He entered the Service February 7, 1804, with an appointment to the Staff in the camp at Saint-Omer. Lieutenant, June 2, 1804, he served as aide-de-camp to Lauriston from October 26, 1804 to October 1, 1805. Captain, April 12, 1808, aide-de-camp to Arrighi, May 10, 1808, he was selected as aide-de-camp by Lauriston and promoted Major, March 26, 1811. After serving as major in a cavalry regiment, he returned to Lauriston as aide-de-camp, June 18, 1813, was promoted Brigadier-General, June 16, 1834, and retired June 8, 1848. Lauriston had sent him with despatches from Petersburg to Paris on March 27, 1812. On April 4th the Ambassador wrote to Champagny: "Silence is still maintained as to the arrest of Speranski and Magnitsky. This silence gives rise to countless conjectures, the cause of it has been attributed to foreign influence. Some suppose complicity with England; others with France. To prove this last assertion it is spread about, especially in commercial circles, that M. de Longuerue, my aide-de-camp, whom I despatched three days before M. Speranski's arrest, has been arrested at Dorpat, and that in his possession had been found the Russian army's plan of campaign." (Lauriston to Champagny, April 4, 1812, in the Grand-Duke Nicholas Mikhailovitch's *Relations*, VI, 254.)

This young officer, travelling as a courier in a heavy barouche which was making slow progress through the sand, had quarrelled with a Russian courier whose light *kibitk* overtook him. The Frenchman thought he had the same right in Russia as in France to stop the Russian from passing him: the other, staunch in his rights as a government courier and with his lighter equipage, urged his postilion forward, easily overtaking and passing M. de Longuerue's carriage, which was half-stuck in the mud. In a fury M. de Longuerue fired his pistols at the Russian, who paid as little heed to the other's shots as to his threats. At Riga the governor intervened, pointing out to the young Frenchman the irregularity of his conduct, and, out of regard for his position as a bearer of government despatches, let the impetuous young man proceed. But the governor reported the matter to his Court, and M. de Lauriston was so incensed at the conduct of his aide-de-camp that he dismissed him. This is what the Emperor cited to me as an attack against one of his couriers for the purpose of robbing him of his despatches.

During this conversation with the Emperor I noticed that he was more thoughtful than usual. Some of my reflections seemed to have impressed him more than he was willing to show. The arrival of the Duke of Bassano, who was announced as bringing despatches from Vienna, interrupted this conversation, which I felt that the Emperor wished to prolong. He dismissed me, and doubtless resumed in another conversation the irresistible course of fatality which was drawing him forward.

By this time the Emperor had already taken his decision. Austria had practically consented to become his ally, and Prussia had had no alternative but to lay up a rod for her own back.

Some days after my last conversation with the Emperor he had sent off a portion of the Household. Horses and carriages were already on the way to Dresden, ostensibly for the interview with the Emperor of Austria.

It will now be as well to pick up the thread of events of greater importance than those I have recounted, those,

at least, in which I took part, or in which I was led to play a role.

Towards the end of winter<sup>1</sup> the Emperor had begun to treat M. de Talleyrand better, and even had several conversations with him. One evening he kept him very late, much to the alarm of Madame de Bassano, who saw in Talleyrand a successor to her husband.<sup>2</sup> The Emperor, who knew her anxiety and felt that it was even communicated to his minister, recounted to him what he had proposed a few days previously to M. de Talleyrand, namely, to go to Warsaw and take charge of affairs there during the expedition, at the same time keeping a watch on Vienna and Germany. M. de Talleyrand had accepted this mission. The Emperor also told the Duke of Bassano, and repeated to me later, that M. de Talleyrand would have served him very well with the Poles, and even in Courland with his niece's mother,<sup>3</sup> if the campaign had met with the success for which he hoped.

The fact is that M. de Talleyrand, delighted to enter once more into affairs, did not speak to a single person of the project which the Emperor had communicated to him under the seal of secrecy, but he opened a credit of 60,000 francs at Vienna,<sup>4</sup> since there was not, as he afterwards explained, any direct exchange between Paris and Warsaw, and he did not wish to find himself embarrassed or hampered at the moment of his arrival. The Emperor, though he had at the time recovered from his first anger with him, later attributed this act, as did the public, to M. de Talleyrand's desire to indicate to Vienna that he was once more entering affairs. But as soon as he was informed, either by the Paris postal officials or the police, of what M. de Talleyrand had done, and learned furthermore that the salons were discussing his selection of an envoy, he

<sup>1</sup> March, 1812.

<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Bassano was at that time Minister for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>3</sup> The Duchess of Courland, mother of the Duchess of Dino.

<sup>4</sup> See Meneval, *Napoléon et Marie-Louise*, I, 324; A. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I* III, 443; *Mémoires du duc de Rovigo*, Garner's edition, IV, 45; Lacour-Gayet, *Talleyrand*, II, 311.

became furious with the Prince, on whom he laid the blame of this indiscretion.

Had it not been for the Duke of Rovigo he would have been banished, for orders to that effect were twice given to the Duke.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor told me of this alleged indiscretion on the part of M. de Talleyrand without going into his plans about him. He spoke of this story of credits opened in Vienna and the news divulged in Paris as an intrigue designed to make himself important, and told me that he was going to banish him. It was not without some trouble that this storm was calmed. The Emperor then added:

"Talleyrand was a fool to leave the ministry, for he would still have been conducting affairs, whilst his impotence is killing him. At heart he regrets being no longer a minister and is intriguing to get money. Those about him are always as needy as himself, and will do anything to get cash. He wishes it to be believed that I cannot dispense with him, but my affairs have not gone any the worse since he ceased to have a hand in them. He has too easily forgotten that it was the battles won by the French which dictated the treaties that he signed. No one in Europe doubts that. Talleyrand's wit pleases me; he can see things, he is a profound politician, far superior to Maret, but he is an inveterate intriguer, and is surrounded by rascals, and that has always displeased me."

I defended M. de Talleyrand, pointing out to the Emperor that the desire he ascribed to him of wishing to return to active politics was the best proof that he had not committed the indiscretion with which he was reproached, that he was not the man to boast beforehand of going to Vienna, if only out of caution with regard to the relations of his niece's family, for he knew the Emperor too well to be indiscreet, and was far too clever to be suspected of such a useless piece of stupidity or indiscretion. I added that there must be some intrigue of which the Emperor knew nothing, and that he would learn of it by summoning M. de Talleyrand.

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Rovigo makes no allusion to these orders in his memoirs.

"I do not wish to see him," said the Emperor. "I am going to give orders for him to be turned out of Paris. I forbid you to go to his house or speak to him about the matter."

The Emperor then questioned me as to a possible choice of his successor. As I named no one, he put forward several names, and among the number that of the Abbé de Pradt.<sup>1</sup>

It is as well to record the truth about events in this affair of M. de Talleyrand, for it was this which drove him to extremities—possibly with good reason.

M. de Bassano, knowing from the Emperor his opinion of M. de Talleyrand, and not concealing from himself the fact that the latter's understanding and method of handling affairs were agreeable to the Emperor, had no doubt whatever that within three months he would be entrusted once again, if he succeeded in exercising the least influence. With this in mind, the Duke mentioned it to his wife on his return, and she lost no time in beseeching a friend to divulge the secret of M. de Talleyrand's mission, allowing it to be understood that the details had been divulged by M. de Talleyrand himself in a moment of confidence.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperor's mood as regards M. de Talleyrand made it easy for him to fall. M. de Rambuteau, the Emperor's chamberlain,<sup>3</sup> circulated the news of his indiscretion. Informed by the police of the gossip in the salons, the Emperor was furious with the Prince. The particulars of the credit at Vienna, obtained through the secret of the post, appeared to the

<sup>1</sup> At Dresden on May 24th, the Archbishop of Malines was designated Ambassador at Warsaw. His instructions bear the date May 28, 1812. "In default of Talleyrand he (Napoleon) chose a caricature of him." (A. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I.*)

<sup>2</sup> According to the Countess of Kielmannsegge whose memoirs, it is true, must be accepted with caution, the indiscretion on the subject of the projected mission, was committed by Madame de Laral and M. de Narbonne (*Mémoires de la Comtesse de Kielmannsegge*, published by Joseph Delage, I, 140.)

<sup>3</sup> The future Prefect of the Seine, Claude Philibert Barthélemy de Rambuteau (1781–1869) was Chamberlain to the Emperor from 1809. In 1811 he had been sent on a mission to Westphalia, and was successively Prefect of Simplon, Loire, and Seine.

Emperor as one more proof of his indiscretion, and irritated His Majesty still more. M. de Bassano triumphed, and M. de Talleyrand, who really avoided banishment by a miracle, was deeper in disgrace than ever.

It was well known that the Emperor was quick to accept his first impressions, and that had M. de Talleyrand been justified, the Emperor would have been slow to go back on his word. The departure was to take place in a few days, so the desired end had been gained. Not content with this success, a playlet was produced in the salon of M. de Bassano into which M. de Talleyrand was brought. The wits in the lovely duchess's boudoir attempted to ridicule his pretended love of peace. Some living caricatures were presented, and I likewise had the honour of being portrayed in one of the liveliest of these diversions. I was presented as a so-called automaton, a puppet made by the *Lame Enchanter* to repeat on all occasions, "*Peace makes for the happiness of nations.*"

The inner circle of those who frequented the Foreign Affairs salon were regaled with these farces for some days, and they only ceased because public opinion was against these humorists, and because, through the police, the Emperor heard rumours of what was going on. It was this intrigue which caused M. de Talleyrand to be no longer considered, and led definitely to the choice of M. de Pradt. As this was a choice not without its influence on our affairs I felt it necessary to enter into all these details.

The Emperor left Paris on May 9th, and on the 10th reached Mayence,<sup>1</sup> where he spent two days. One evening he sent for me, and engaged in another long conversation on the same topic as before. Here, as in Paris, he sought with particular care to convince me that he did not desire war, that

<sup>1</sup> Caulaincourt is mistaken by a day. On the night of the 9th Napoleon and Marie Louise slept at Châlons-sur-Marne. They arrived at Metz on the 10th, set out at two o'clock in the morning of the 11th, and reached Mayence the same day at nine o'clock in the evening. The Emperor put up at the Artillery School, and stayed in Mayence until dawn on the 13th.

it was a mistake to be alarmed, that everything would be straightened out. I always replied with the same pleas, and the Emperor listened without annoyance to the reflections which might have greatly displeased him. It was not enough for him to have the weapons of power and force; he desired also to have the weapon of opinion.

Having spoken of Russia, of the assistance of Austria, "completely in my system," he said, "through the folly of the Russian cabinet which had stood on its dignity and refused Austria's mediation, and even her good offices in regard to our differences," he then reiterated, as usual, that he did not want war, that an understanding and arrangement were possible if the Tsar Alexander so wished.<sup>1</sup>

Then he spoke of the Turks, and of the Swedes. He complained much of M. de Bassano, accusing him of want of foresight. He said that he was not served properly; that the Minister of Foreign Affairs only went as far as he was pushed; that M. de Bassano had no head; that everything fell on him-

<sup>1</sup> The gigantic undertaking of the Russian campaign had already given such food for thought to everyone, especially to men with some foresight, that many people thought it must end in a colossal disaster, or anyhow in events that no precautions could provide against. Men who were already plotting or who, never having ceased to desire another order of things, still entertained ideas of a restoration, felt that it could only lead to conditions such as to strengthen their hopes. Certain it is that M. de Semonville, being in the month of May with M. de Capelle, at that time Prefect of Geneva, and seeing the numbers of battalions marching through to the north of Germany, remarked, "All those passing by are lost; they will not return." M. de Capelle, all the more astounded because he was accustomed to believe in the Emperor's fortune, expressed his doubts. The discussion grew lively, and M. de Semonville demonstrated that it was impossible for such an enterprise to end in anything but disaster and culminate in events that would change the aspect of everything. From this he concluded that circumstances must necessarily lead to favourable opportunities for the Bourbons, that the difficulty of making another choice and the trend of affairs, together with their inoffensive position with regard to everybody, must bring them forward again. The fact of this conversation was assured to me by someone who had kept a note of it from M. de Capelle since 1813. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

self; that Sweden ought to have been in arms three months before in order to profit by the chance of reconquering Finland; that the Turks ought to have 200,000 men on the Danube; that anybody but M. de Bassano would have made them unfurl the standard of Mohammed two months ago; that those two Powers, Sweden and Turkey, would never again have such a splendid opportunity of recovering what Russia had taken from them; that their inaction was a grave political mistake; and that his lack of prompt co-operation by their forces at this moment was the fault of M. de Bassano. He said that *the minister would be responsible to France for this*; that half the campaign ought to have been fought by this minister, but that he had hardly given it a thought, though he had been rebuked for it.

The Emperor seemed in an exceedingly bad temper and highly displeased with the Duke. I raised the objection that it was not usual "*to act without His Majesty's orders; that he would not approve.*" I went on, that as he continued to repeat that he did not want war, the cabinets of Sweden and Turkey had feared to go too far and compromise themselves; that his minister had doubtless not dared to act too openly for fear of disclosing too soon projects which he himself was still denying; finally, that the Swedish prince had too much at stake, so far as his personal interest was concerned, not to be very circumspect. Again I represented to the Emperor that the peace between Russia and Turkey had long depended on the cabinet at Petersburg; I was convinced that Russia would have signed it if she had so wished, and would sign it when she desired; and it was because she had as yet no news that she had delayed to do so.<sup>1</sup> I repeated to him, what he must have been informed in despatches, that the Tsar Alexander had no wish to make war against him, and that he was possibly still in doubt as to whether the Emperor Napoleon had finally decided to commence hostilities.

"This reflection," I added, "cannot have escaped Your Majesty. It is an irrefutable proof that the Tsar's plans are

<sup>1</sup> The peace between Russia and Turkey was signed at Bucharest, May 28, 1812, subject to ratification by the sovereigns.

defensive and have never been offensive, for he would certainly have begun by making peace with the Turks, if he had wished for war with Your Majesty, even were it only to have his own troops at his disposal."

The Emperor was silent for some moments, like a man who was reflecting and feeling the justness of my observations. He then said with some warmth that he was sure of the Turks, that perhaps they would not make a powerful diversion, but that they would certainly not sign the peace; they were well aware of what was in preparation, and clumsy as they might be in political matters, they were not blind when it came to matters of such great importance, and in any case they were not without hints of what was afoot.

"As for Bernadotte," he said, "he is quite capable of forgetting that he is a Frenchman by birth, but the Swedes are too energetic and too enlightened to lose such an opportunity of revenge for all the injurics they have received since the days of Peter the Great."

The Emperor reverted more than once to his hopes of the Turks.

"Andréossy will wake them up,"<sup>1</sup> he said. "His arrival will have caused a great sensation."

I raised the objection that he had only just started.

"That is Maret's fault. I can't do everything."

He repeated what he had already said to me about the Duke of Bassano, adding that he would be responsible to France for all the harm that might result from his lack of foresight.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> General Antoine François Andréossy (1761-1828) designated in April to proceed to Turkey as ambassador.

<sup>2</sup> The Emperor was unfair in complaining of the delay in sending Count Andréossy to Constantinople for, wishing above all things to prolong the Russian cabinet's sense of security and at the same time to conceal his own plans, he had not sent Andréossy's final instructions until the moment of his own departure, and even instructed him to stay at Laibach, where he arrived about June 8th. The Emperor thought he had set the Porte in motion, and sufficiently indicated his own intentions by the article concerning it in the treaty of a hundred clauses with Austria.

It is said that we went to Dresden by way of Bamberg to avoid the German princelings.<sup>1</sup> The truth is that the Emperor wanted to avoid Weimar.<sup>2</sup> He kept on saying, and the Court repeated it after him, that he did not want war. Rumours were purposely spread of an interview with the Tsar Alexander, and attempts were made to find confirmation of these rumours in the mission of M. de Narbonne, who was sent to that sovereign's court.<sup>3</sup>

It was on May 28th that peace was signed at Bucharest between Russia and Turkey. The Pruth became the boundary between the two States, and by this peace treaty Russia acquired Bessarabia and the portion of Moldavia lying on the left bank of the Pruth. Russia ratified the treaty on June 23rd, the Porte not until July 14th. The Sultan was furious at the treaty when he learned of our advance, but English influence and the traditional fidelity of the Turks to their engagements carried the point in the Divan. It was not until the end of June that M. Andréossy received orders to continue his journey. He made all haste but could not reach Constantinople before July 25th. It is to be noted that the peace with Turkey was signed sooner than the Russian cabinet hoped for, as Prince Kutusoff, charged with the negotiations and being Commandant in Moldavia, having learned that he had been replaced by Admiral Tchitchagoff, who was on his way thither, took upon himself to end the negotiations and thus rob his successor of the honour. The Russian cabinet, which had been so tardy in performing its part, did not remain inactive as soon as it found the matter decided, for almost at the same time, on July 20th at Velikuliki, it concluded an offensive and defensive treaty with the Spanish Cortes. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*) By the treaty of a hundred clauses Caulaincourt means the treaty of March 14, 1812, between France and Austria.

<sup>1</sup> All the same, this did not stop the princes from hurrying to meet him, "bowed," according to A. Vandal in his *Napoléon et Alexandre I.* in an attitude of adoration. The sovereigns of Anhalt and Hesse Darmstadt; the King of Wurtemburg, and the Grand-Duke of Baden at Wurtzburg; Dukes William and Pius of Bavaria, at Bamberg.

<sup>2</sup> The Grand Duke of Weimar was the Tsar's brother-in-law.

<sup>3</sup> M. de Narbonne was at Berlin; charged with superintending the execution of the treaty with Prussia, when he received orders to go to Wilna, where Napoleon supposed that Alexander was staying. Narbonne bore a note from the Duke of Bassano to

Dresden was reached on the 16th, the night of the 13th being passed at Wurzburg, the 14th at Bayreuth and the 15th at Plauen.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor and all those attached to the ministry were at pains to give a tinge of moderation to our conduct, our views and our actions that should put appearances on our side and so impress Austria. To this end particular care was taken to appear conciliatory and moderate; efforts were also made to induce a false sense of security in those whom it was desired to attack.

The Emperor had travelled with the Empress. For six weeks the whole countryside had been working to repair the roads we had to follow. The King and Queen of Saxony had preceded their Majesties to Plauen.<sup>2</sup> There was a torch-light procession at our entrance into Dresden, where the Austrian Court arrived two days later.<sup>3</sup> Not having taken any part in affairs, I had not sufficient positive knowledge of what passed at that interview to enable me to relate it in detail.

The Emperor set things in motion to circumvent M. Metternich, and especially to see that there should be echoes about his moderation, and his anxiety to obtain, through M.

Rumiantsof, and a letter from Napoleon to Alexander, both written on May 3rd, but antedated April 30th. (*Correspondance, 18669.*) Narbonne arrived at Wilna on May 18th, was received the same day by Alexander, and started on the 19th, to be at Dresden on the 26th, where he gave Napoleon an account of his mission.

<sup>1</sup> The *Archives de Caulaincourt* contain a curious document. It is in the handwriting of a secretary, but it is undoubtedly, if not the actual notes of the Master of Horse himself, at least those of one of his officials who attended Napoleon wherever he went. This paper gives the Emperor's itinerary from May 9, 1812 to October 11, 1812.

<sup>2</sup> Caulaincourt is slightly mistaken here. Actually the King and Queen of Saxony were waiting for Napoleon and Marie Louise not at Plauen but at Freyberg, eight leagues from Dresden. They had arrived there on May 15th, and the King did not like to go to bed for fear of not being up when the Emperor should arrive.

<sup>3</sup> The Emperor and Empress of Austria, accompanied by Metternich, arrived at Dresden at one o'clock in the afternoon of the 18th.

de Narbonne, the explanations which the Tsar of Russia had refused to Austria so as to effect a general conciliation without recourse to hostilities. For the first, and perhaps the last time, the Emperor spoke very well of M. Metternich. For my part, I lived in a very retired way, carefully avoiding any occasion of discussing affairs since I could not do so in the sense desired by the Emperor. I only saw the Austrians at the State functions at night. Like all the high officials of the Court, I had the honour of dining with their Majesties. After dinner the Emperor of Austria made a tour of the room, chatting for a few moments with everyone. My turn came one day, as I was talking to the Duke of Istria in the embrasure of a window. The Emperor Francis spoke of the Emperor Alexander and told me that that prince was wrong not to explain himself, as thereby he might have avoided a rupture. He himself had done all he could to explain away the various differences that existed, but the Russians had not wanted him; yet, after what the Emperor Napoleon had said to him he was ready to listen and even still disposed to act as a mediator. Russia had not replied to Vienna's offer of intervention any more than she had to France's, and this silence had a bad effect. The inference could be drawn that at Petersburg they were ready to run all the risks of war, and even wished for it; and in that way one could be dragged into making war when one could have avoided it. He added, that I must be well acquainted with the Tsar Alexander. He had been represented to him as a prince of rather undecided character, susceptible to influence, but in matters of such consequence he ought to rely upon himself and, above all, not wage war until he had exhausted every means for preserving peace.

I replied that in my opinion he had been misjudged. For some time he had, no doubt wrongly, an unfounded mistrust of his own means, dependent on his good and conscientious intentions. This mistrust might well have misled people as to his character and made him seem weak, or, rather, undecided. I was ignorant of what had happened since I had left Petersburg, but I was still convinced that he did not wish for war, and would wage it only with extreme reluctance. I

considered him obstinate when a question had been decided, and as this was the case, I was sure that he would never give way. I added that we had now reached a juncture, His Majesty being at Dresden with the Emperor Napoleon, when war seemed to me inevitable. "It is very unfortunate," replied the Emperor of Austria. He then spoke of other things, of the Emperor's love of riding, about horses, etc., and there the conversation ended.

Was this a considered opinion, resulting from what our cabinet had said, or merely the consequence of some lingering irritation about the campaign of 1809? I leave the reader to judge. For my own part, if I can judge from what came to me of all that was said and done, I should say that the Emperor of Austria and his ministers seemed to believe firmly that Russia could have averted war by making the explanations they had refused and by a little real severity at the moment against the trade with pretended neutrals.

Russia betrayed, indeed, a certain arrogance in not entering into explanations with the cabinet of Vienna and so annoyed the latter. If this conduct showed a certain dignity it also showed clumsiness, as it carried the day for us in public opinion, and so played into our hands. It was then that M. de Rumiantsof sent the note of Prince Kurakin which the Emperor Napoleon found so imperious.<sup>1</sup> M. de Rumiantsof recalled that their grievances were so well known, our *wrongdoings and bad faith* so notorious, that it was mockery for us to require an explanation from them when it was for Russia to demand satisfaction from us; that any explanations which they might give would suggest embarrassment and fear, and would serve no purpose if the Emperor Napoleon had made his decision, whereas, if he had not done so, their silence would bear a character of dignity appropriate to a great Power which in these circumstances was strong in her rectitude. Recriminations

<sup>1</sup> On April 30th Prince Kurakin remitted a declaration, drawn up from a note of April 8th that Rumiantsof had sent him, and which had reached him on the 24th of that month. Cf. A. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre I*, III, 382; and Fain, *Manuscrit 1812, 1827*, I. 140, *et seq.*

should be left to those who were weak or afraid. The Tsar Alexander, and M. de Rumiantsof still more so, believed that the whole intention was to intimidate them, and oblige them to agree to new claims. They were convinced that at heart the Emperor Napoleon could not have resolved to start a war, and sacrifice to that the results already obtained by the Continental System, which, although relaxed in some respects, still wounded England in her most cherished interests. This would explain the delay in signing the peace with the Turks and the admission of the English.

M. de Narbonne, who had been sent to Wilna to the Tsar Alexander, arrived back at Dresden. The Emperor instructed him to see M. Metternich and tell the Emperor of Austria what he wished to know about his mission.

The Emperor, who thought that the part he had taken in the marriage of the Archduchess Marie Louise,<sup>1</sup> his reputation as a man of intelligence, and his relations with Prince Schwarzenburg, would render M. de Narbonne particularly agreeable to the Austrian Court, had chosen him expressly for this mission, thinking that whatever he said would have more effect on the mind of his father-in-law.

M. de Narbonne came to see me and told me what the Tsar had said to him, what he had observed, and what he had loyally reported to the Emperor Napoleon, who had instructed him to repeat it in part to the Emperor of Austria and M. Metternich.

I note, more or less, M. de Narbonne's exact words, for I wrote them down at the time; and this conversation having been repeated to me several times by him, I have been able to verify the accuracy of my notes.

<sup>1</sup> In the course of a visit to Vienna, after the Peace of 1809, on his return from Trieste where he had visited the French princesses, M. de Narbonne had received overtures from Metternich regarding the marriage of Napoleon and Marie Louise, although the divorce with Josephine had not yet been pronounced. In his *Mémoires* (III, 204) Rovigo has doubted the part taken by Narbonne in the marriage, but Frédéric Masson (*L'Impératrice Marie-Louise*, p. 43) expressed his belief in Metternich's proposal. Caulaincourt's text confirms the latter historian's opinion.

The Tsar Alexander had welcomed him cordially. He had been welcomed by everyone; their general bearing was appropriate to the occasion, dignified but not boastful. He attended two reviews. The troops appeared to be a fine body of men. M. de Rumiantsof was not there at the time of his arrival. From the outset the Tsar had spoken to him frankly:

"I shall not be the first to draw the sword. I have no wish to be saddled, in the eyes of Europe, with the responsibility of the blood that will be shed in this war. For eighteen months I have been threatened. The French army is three hundred leagues from its own country and actually on my frontiers, whereas I am on my own territory. Vital points on my frontiers are being fortified and armed; arms are being sent up; the Poles are being incited; an outcry is being raised that I harbour neutrals and admit Americans, while all the time the Emperor is selling licences in France, admitting vessels that are being used to carry freights from England. The Emperor is swelling his fiscal receipts and ruining some of his unfortunate subjects. I have declared, following the principle, that I have no intention of doing this. I cannot take money from the pockets of my subjects to put into my own. The Emperor Napoleon and his agents declare that I favour England, and do not carry out the measures of the Continental System. If this were true, would sixty or eighty ships have been seized as contraband? Do you imagine that the English have not been knocking at my door in every way they could? Had I wished, I could have had ten English agents for every one that I have had; but I have not so much as listened to them. Three hundred thousand French troops are ready to cross my frontier, though I am still in the alliance and faithful to all the engagements I have made. When I change, I will do so openly. Ask Caulaincourt what I said to him when the Emperor Napoleon deviated from the alliance, and what I told him on his departure. Caulaincourt is a man of honour, and not a man to be imposed upon. As I was then, so I am to-day, whatever the Emperor Napoleon may have done to break out friendly relations. He is raising Austria, Prussia, all Europe in arms against Russia; yet I am

still in the alliance, so firmly has my reason forbidden me to believe that he would wish to sacrifice real advantages to the hazards of this war. I am under no illusions. I render too much justice to his military talents not to have calculated all the risks that an appeal to arms may involve for us, but, having done all I could to preserve peace honourably and uphold a political system which might lead to universal peace, I will do nothing to besmirch the honour of the nation over which I rule. The Russian nation is not one to shrink from danger. All the bayonets in Europe waiting at my frontiers will not make me speak otherwise. My patience and moderation come not from weakness, but from the duty of a sovereign to heed no feelings of resentment, to envisage nothing but the peace and welfare of his people in questions of such far-reaching importance, and when he can hope to avert a struggle which must cost them so many sacrifices. Can the Emperor Napoleon, in all good faith, demand explanations when, in a time of total peace, he invades the North of Germany, when he fails to observe the engagements of the alliance and carry out the principles of his Continental System? Is it not he who should explain his motives? I sent a frankly worded note by Prince Kurakin. My grievances are known to all Europe; it is an insult to the intelligence of everyone to imply that there are secrets. Even now I am ready to come to any understanding which will preserve peace; but it must be in writing, in a form that will show on which side good faith and justice lie."

The Tsar, moreover, told him that at the moment of speaking he was under no engagement contrary to the alliance, that he was strong in the rights and justice of his cause, and that he would defend himself if attacked. He concluded by spreading out a map of Russia and pointing to the farthest limits of the country.

"If the Emperor Napoleon is determined on war," he said, "and if fortune does not smile on our just cause, his hunt for peace will take him to the uttermost ends."

He then said once again that he would not fire the first shot, but also that he would sheath the sword last.

M. de Narbonne further told me that during his stay at Wilna the Tsar Alexander had always spoken to him in this sense, unaffectedly and without ill feeling, not even showing any bitterness towards the Emperor Napoleon personally; he had also spoken of myself with great esteem and kindness. M. de Narbonne seemed quite content with all that the sovereign had said, and was convinced of the truth of his arguments. He added that the Emperor Napoleon seemed to be impressed by the report made to him, though he kept on complaining of the Tsar's falseness, and constantly returned to his chapter of grievances against him.

The King of Prussia and the Crown Prince, whom the Emperor had wished to meet in Dresden for the purpose of some kind of public reconciliation which would guarantee the satisfactory and free co-operation of Prussia, arrived in Dresden.<sup>1</sup> Some thought that the Emperor would not treat the King well, for he did not like him and always observed, when speaking of him, "He is merely a drill sergeant, a blockhead." But the Emperor made his good humour wait on his interest, and at the moment it was very much to his interest to persuade the King that he was admitting him freely into the political system of France, and had no hidden motives of hostility. The King and the Crown Prince left delighted with the welcome they had received.

<sup>1</sup> Frederick William III arrived in Dresden on May 26th, at 11 a.m. His son, the Crown Prince (Frederick William IV), arrived on the following day.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Towards Moscovy*

THE Emperor left Dresden on May 29th; the Empress was at Prague, where she had gone to pass a short time with the Austrian Court. The Emperor Napoleon only spent one night at Glogau. Until June 1st he remained at Posen, from the 2nd to the 6th at Thorn, from the 7th to the 10th at Danzig, the 11th at Marienburg, from the 12th to the 16th at Königsberg, the 17th at Insterburg, from the 18th to the 21st at Gumbinnen, the 21st at Wilkowischki, the 22nd at Nau-garaidski, the 23rd under canvas on the bank of the Niemen.

I return to the Emperor's stay at Danzig, for that was the great army depot, the place where everything had been organized and prepared during the last two years, and to which the Emperor devoted the greatest attention, for it was the strong point which had to supply all his needs. The King of Naples, who had not received permission to repair to Dresden, ostensibly out of regard for the Emperor of Austria, was waiting there for the Emperor Napoleon. On the score that his father-in-law always had Italy much at heart, Napoleon pretended that he did not wish to mar his pleasure at seeing his daughter again by the sight of a sovereign who would only recall painful memories. The truth is that that was a very convenient pretext. The Emperor remarked in confidence that he did not want Murat to establish relations with the Austrians, with whom too many ties already existed between the Queen and Metternich.<sup>1</sup> "Murat's head will be turned if the Emperor of Austria treats him well, and he will be certain to talk all sorts of nonsense," etc.

There was complete coldness between the Emperor and the King of Naples, and the refusal to allow him to go to

<sup>1</sup> There was no longer any secret about the relations between Caroline, Murat's wife, and Metternich.

Dresden only served to increase the latter's discontent. The Emperor rightly reproached him with having frequently evaded the Continental System along the coasts of the Kingdom of Naples and had written and talked impressively on the subject. Being now in need of the King on his campaign, he had to do everything to please him. The King was petulant, but weak. He was fond of the Emperor, who was aware of the ascendancy he had over him. Good relations were established at the first conversation, though the Emperor had repeated that morning what he had already said before he left Paris, that the King had forgotten he was a Frenchman by birth and that his brother-in-law had made him a king. For his part, the King complained openly that he was a sovereign only in name, that he was called upon to sacrifice the interests of his people to what the Emperor called the interests of the Continent and of France (expressions which were conveyed to the Emperor and incensed him even more than the question of contraband).

The Emperor Napoleon's first words to General Rapp, Governor of Danzig, were :

"What are your merchants doing with all their money? War is going to start. Now I will look after them myself."<sup>1</sup>

In the course of a conversation after dinner, he remarked to Rapp, the King of Naples, and several other persons, that the Prussians and even the Austrians would make common cause with us, that Alexander did not expect this, and would be greatly embarrassed, although he had wanted the war. He added that if Alexander really did not want war he could still avert it, but the situation would be clarified in a few days.<sup>2</sup> It could easily be seen that this talk was designed to be

<sup>1</sup> "He opened the conversation with me by an amusing question. 'What are the Danzig men doing with their money, with what they are making, and what I am spending for their benefit?' I replied that their situation was far from prosperous, that they were suffering and in a tight corner. 'That will all be changed,' he replied, 'that is an understood thing; I will take care of them myself.'" *Mémoires de General Rapp*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires de Rapp*, p. 164, confirms this story.

repeated by all the political echoes. The Emperor's real wishes were expressed in the first remarks when he saw Rapp, uttered in the presence of myself and several other persons.

That evening and the next morning the Emperor complained much to me of the King of Naples, who, he said, was no longer a Frenchman and forgot what he owed to his country and his benefactor. On his side, the King complained to Berthier, Duroc and myself that the Emperor had made him merely a viceroy, an instrument to squeeze money out of his subjects, etc., etc.

When receiving the civil authorities, who complained of their excessive burdens, the Emperor tried to soothe them, or rather told them, according to what was repeated at Berlin and Petersburg, that he would take charge of them himself, and incorporate them into the great Empire.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor welcomed the King quite cordially in public, but taking him aside, undoubtedly to forestall his complaints, he began by scolding and being angry with him.<sup>2</sup> He expostulated with him for his ingratitude, and, at the close of the conversation, he showed both spleen and sentiment—"both necessary in dealing with that Neapolitan pantaloon," he told me.

"He has a good heart, and at bottom he likes me better than his lazzaroni. When he sees me he is mine, but away from me, he sides, like all spineless men, with anyone who flatters or makes up to him. If he had come to Dresden his vanity and self-interest would have led him into count-

<sup>1</sup> He received "the civil authorities; he addressed to them various questions concerning commerce and finance: they deplored their position; 'That will be changed,' he told them, 'I will look after you myself; that is understood; it is only large families that prosper.'" (*Memoires de Rapp*, p. 165.)

<sup>2</sup> See the narrative of Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, I, 87): "The King of Naples . . . had come to Dresden to complain conveniently to Rapp of how he had been kept out of the Dresden meeting." In its general lines this narrative confirms Caulaincourt's version.

less follies in trying to manage the Austrians. His wife is ambitious, and has stuffed his head with foolishness. He wants to have the whole of Italy; that is his dream, and that is what prevents him from wanting the crown of Poland. I would put Jerome on the throne and make a splendid kingdom for him, but he would have to do something for it, for the Poles love glory. Jerome cares for nothing but pageantry, women, plays and fêtes. My brothers do not back me up. Their only princely quality is their foolish vanity; they lack talent and energy. I have to govern for them. Without me they would ruin the poor Westphalians to enrich their favourites and mistresses, to give fêtes and build palaces. My brothers think of nothing but themselves, yet I set them a good example. I am the King of the people, for I spend nothing except on encouraging the arts and leaving memories that shall be glorious and useful to the nation. It can never be said that I endow favourites and mistresses. I give rewards only for services rendered to the country, and nothing else."

Headquarters and the staff were moved to Thorn, whence everything was sent on to Insterburg, along with the Guard, on the morning after arrival. The Emperor joined headquarters at Insterburg and followed its movement in the direction of Kovno, passing by Gumbinnen, Stalluppöhnen, Wilkowischki and a forest road, leaving Marienpol on the right. The troops marching along the road were superb, and received the Emperor with real enthusiasm. The men of the First Corps<sup>1</sup> were noticeable for their fine uniform and general smartness. Coming from excellent quarters, fresh from the hands of a commander who had spent a long time on them, they could rival the Guard. All this mass of youth was full of ardour and good health. The men of this corps carried rations for a fortnight in their haversacks.

The Prince of Eckmühl, who was already on the banks of the Niemen, had built ovens where provisions were cooked

<sup>1</sup> Davout's corps.

as the corps arrived, a detachment of bricklayers having been attached to the advance guard.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor joined the Prince's headquarters, situated a league from the Niemen and from Kovno.<sup>2</sup> Day was breaking, and he immediately made a reconnaissance of the river banks and the neighbourhood. He did not return till evening, when he spent two hours dictating orders; he then mounted his horse once more and made a reconnaissance by moonlight nearer the banks of the river, to determine the place for the crossing. Without exception everyone was left at some distance, so as not to attract the attention of any Russian outposts who might be across the river. The Emperor went up and down the bank, accompanied by General Haxo<sup>3</sup> of

<sup>1</sup> Two months before the opening of the Russian campaign the Emperor instructed the Prince of Neuchâtel to see to the means of furnishing the troops with fifteen days' rations. He commissioned General Dalton to consult with several colonels and prepare him a scheme. No addition was to be made to the weight the soldier already carried; he had to have his proper number of cartridges, so something had to be taken from him that he could possibly do without. He was left with only a haversack, one shirt, three pairs of shoes, a pair of heavy cloth trousers with black half-gaiters, linen trousers and gaiters. The space thus saved was allotted to a bag with ten pounds of flour to last for five days, bread for four days, biscuit for six days. At first some of the young soldiers, finding themselves so well provided for, threw away the flour. The officers found this out and Colonel Vasserot when reviewing the 1st Brigade of the Army Corps ordered the empty flour bags to be filled with sand and the delinquents to carry them thus until the time came for them to be refilled with flour. Thus held up to the ridicule of their comrades, every man in the ranks had his right quota of rations by the time the Niemen was crossed. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*) General Alexandre Dalton, who was, later on, seriously wounded at Smolensk, was at that time in command of the First Corps, and Colonel Vasserot (promoted General of Division May 22, 1825, and died December 3, 1840) commanded the 17th Regiment of Infantry of the line.

<sup>2</sup> At two o'clock on the night of 22nd to 23rd, Davout's headquarters were at Gora, but the Prince of Eckmühl rejoined the Emperor near the village of Alexota.

<sup>3</sup> General Haxo was in command of the Engineers of the Army of Germany.

the Engineers. During the morning he had already been obliged to wear the cloak of a Polish soldier, in order to attract less attention.

When the reconnaissance was finished he rejoined his staff officers, and once more examined the different points to be occupied by the troops. As he galloped through the wheat a hare started out between the legs of the Emperor's horse,<sup>1</sup> and made him swerve slightly. The Emperor, who had not a good seat, rolled to the ground, but got up so quickly that he was on his feet before I could reach him to give him a hand. He mounted again without saying a word. The ground was very soft and he was only slightly bruised on the hip. The reflection occurred to me at once that this was a bad augury, nor was I the only one to think so, for the Prince of Neuchâtel instantly seized my hand and said, "We should do better not to cross the Niemen. This fall is a bad omen."

The Emperor, who at first had kept a complete silence, though his private thoughts were doubtless no more cheerful than our own, presently began to joke with the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself about his fall; but his bad temper and forebodings were obvious despite his efforts at concealment. In other circumstances he would have blamed the charger which had caused this foolish accident, and would not have spared the Master of the Horse. Now, however, he affected the utmost serenity, and did all he could to banish the gloomy doubts which everyone inevitably felt, for people are superstitious despite themselves in such serious moments and on the eve of such great events. Talk about his fall was general; some of the headquarters staff observed that the Romans, who believed in omens, would not have undertaken the crossing of the Niemen.<sup>2</sup> During the whole day the Emperor,

<sup>1</sup> This horse was Friedland.

<sup>2</sup> "As he appeared on this bank his horse suddenly stumbled and threw him to the ground. A voice cried, 'That is a bad omen; a Roman would draw back.' It is not known whether it was he or one of his suite that uttered these words." (Ségur, *Histoire et Mémoires*, IV, 137.)

usually so cheerful and active when his troops were carrying out extensive operations, was very serious and preoccupied.

There was no news from the other side of the river; communications had been interrupted for some days.

The Prince of Eckmühl, the staff, and everyone, complained that they could obtain no information, and that none of their spies returned. The only sign of life on the opposite bank was an occasional Cossack patrol. During the day the Emperor inspected his troops and continued to reconnoitre the neighbourhood. The corps on our right knew no more than we did of the enemy's movements. They had no news whatever of the Russians. Everyone was complaining that no spies came back, a fact which put the Emperor in bad humour. We only heard from Marienpol that a Jew, coming from the interior, reported that the Russian army was in retreat, and that we were faced only by Cossacks.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor believed that the Russians were massing on Troki for the defence of Wilna.

The Emperor summoned me after dinner and asked what had caused him to be thrown; he said he was scarcely hurt but had got up so quickly that probably in the darkness no one would have noticed the accident. He asked if it was being talked about at headquarters. He then renewed several inquiries about Russia, the mode of life of the inhabitants, the

<sup>1</sup> It is interesting to compare the text with the *Itineraire des Archives de Caulaincourt*:

"23rd. Arrived at Naugaraidski at one o'clock in the morning. Mounted Gonzalon. Wore a Polish cloak, black silk cap, with General Haxo, the Prince of Neuchâtel and the Master of the Horse to reconnoitre the Niemen. Followed the water's-edge along the left bank from below Kovno to a league and a half above it. Returned to Naugaraidski at three o'clock. Went into his tent. Mounted Friedland at six in the evening, inspected the pontoon train on the Kowno road, reconnoitred towards Marienpol. Returned at eight o'clock. At nine o'clock mounted the same horse and rode over the heights and the river banks from the point opposite Kovno to where the pontoons had been thrown across. Dismounted at midnight. Ordered artillery to be placed on the hill at the left. Returned to the bridge-head. Had the tents pitched 2000 yards to the rear. Returned at two o'clock in the morning."

resources offered by the towns and villages, the state of the roads. He asked if the peasants had any energy, if they were the sort of people to arm themselves and form bands like the Spaniards, and finally if I thought that the army had retreated and thus delivered Wilna to him without giving battle. He seemed to be very anxious that this should be so, but he argued to convince me that the Russians could not have retreated from Marienpol, as had been reported, and thus given up the capital of Lithuania,<sup>1</sup> and in consequence the whole of Russian Poland, without fighting, if only not to dishonour themselves in the eyes of the Poles. He pressed for my opinion upon this retirement.

I answered that I did not believe in pitched battles, that I thought, as I had always told him, that the terrain was not so limited but that they could yield a great deal, if only to lead him a long distance from his base and oblige him to divide his forces.

"Then I have got Poland," answered the Emperor briskly. "And in the eyes of the Poles Alexander has the undying shame of having lost it without fighting. To give me Wilna is to lose Poland."

He dwelt at some length on this point, on the deployment of his forces, and their rapid movement, and drew the conclusion that it was impossible for the Russians to save their material and artillery. He even believed that some of it would be destroyed through their inability to escape the rapidity of his movements. He counted and reckoned up the hours it would take him to reach Wilna, and pressed me with questions as if I had done the journey, as if it were only a question of travelling there in a postchaise.

"In less than two months' time," the Emperor said to me, "Russia will be suing for peace. The great landowners will be terrified, some of them ruined. The Tsar Alexander will be in a very awkward position, for at heart the Russians care nothing for the Poles, certainly not enough to face ruin for their sakes."

To avoid being contradicted the Emperor delivered a rapid

<sup>1</sup> Wilna.

fire of questions and answers in the sense that he desired, all the time giving the impression of pressing me to answer, and continually asking me, without giving me the chance to get in a word, whether I did not think as he did.

My silence when he had finished speaking vexed him. He wanted an answer conforming to his own ideas. I told him that I could only recall what the Tsar Alexander had said to me, that he rendered full justice to the Emperor's great military talents, and that as far as possible he would avoid pitting himself against him; if he was beaten he would follow the example of the Spaniards, who had often been beaten but had never submitted; lack of perseverance had been the ruin of other States, but he would not fire the first shot, and would sooner retreat to Kamtchatka than surrender provinces or make sacrifices that could never lead to more than a truce.

The Emperor listened to me and dismissed me without replying.

The Niemen was crossed by Morand's division during the night.<sup>1</sup> The others followed, the bridging material having been taken to the river in advance. This operation was carried out in a few hours without the slightest difficulty, and without any opposition, even from the Cossacks, small numbers of whom were on the farther bank and who only replied to our shots when our troops entered the first village on the other side, some distance from the river.

The Emperor crossed during the morning, as soon as the 1st Division was established, and seemed greatly astonished to learn that the Russian army, which had been at Wilna, had retreated three days previously. Several reports had to be given to him, and various people who had come from over there were taken to him, before he would believe the news. He followed the movements of the advance guard for more than two leagues, pressed forward the whole army, and

<sup>1</sup> Night of June 23-24, 1812. The pontoon detachments, under the orders of General Eblé, began to throw their bridges across at ten o'clock on the night of the 23rd. They were ready by midnight and Morand's division (the 1st Division of the 1st Corps) crossed to the right bank.

questioned all the country folk whom he could find, but obtained no positive news; Poles were sent out in all directions to gather information.

The Emperor returned to Kovno,<sup>1</sup> visited the town and its environs, and was occupied until nightfall in pressing the crossing of the Wilia, which was undertaken by some swimmers, and by erecting a bridge for the passage of an army corps which was to operate on the other side of that river.

It was M. de Guéheneuc who led a couple of hundred determined swimmers across the river.<sup>2</sup> He returned from his regiment of light infantry and leaped fully clothed into the river to save a lancer who was being carried away by the current. The Emperor considered that this action, praiseworthy enough in itself, was not appropriate to a colonel at the head of his regiment in the face of the enemy, and told him so.

The Emperor spent the night at the Russian convent a quarter of a league from Kovno. There he stayed until the 26th to work out his plans, press forward the passage of the Niemen, and accelerate the movement of the troops in every direction. He learned that the Russian army was in full retreat, but that as it covered too extended a front, the left,

<sup>1</sup> He arrived at Kovno at four o'clock in the afternoon, according to the *Itinéraire de l'Empereur Napoléon pendant la campagne de 1812*, by Baron Denniée, p. 18; at eight o'clock according to the *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt*. But the first is speaking of the town, the other of the convent.

<sup>2</sup> Colonel Charles Louis Olivier Joseph de Guéheneuc, born at Valenciennes June 7, 1783, died August 26, 1849: brother-in-law of Marshal Lannes, commanded the 13th Regiment of light infantry. This regiment had been ordered to find a ford over the Wilia. The search for this was a prolonged one, and Guéheneuc, tired of waiting, called for volunteers to swim the river and reconnoitre on the opposite bank. Several men came forward and carried out this exploit. Their example encouraged a crowd of French and Polish horsemen to follow suit, but the current was rapid and dangerous and several unfortunate men were carried away. It was then that Colonel Guéheneuc, without removing his uniform, pushed his horse into the river and succeeded in saving one of the men. This incident has been told, amplified and travestied, by Tolstoy in *War and Peace*.

under Bagration, was so far away that it would have difficulty in keeping communications with the centre.

"I will take a hand in it," said the Emperor, "if the Russians will not fight before Wilna."

The Emperor would gladly have given wings to the entire army. On the 27th he slept at Owzianiskai, and on the 28th arrived at Wilna at nine o'clock in the morning.<sup>1</sup> This rapid movement, without stores, exhausted and destroyed all the resources and houses which lay on the way. The advance guard lived quite well, but the rest of the army was dying of hunger. Exhaustion, added to want and the piercingly cold rains at night, caused the death of 10,000<sup>2</sup> horses. Many of the young Guard died on the road of fatigue, cold and hunger. The chiefs wanted these young men to rival the veterans who had survived so many toils, perils and privations, and the youth of the army was thus the victim of a misplaced zeal.

The Prince of Eckmühl, who supported the advance guard of the King of Naples, had announced that Lieutenant-General Balachoff,<sup>3</sup> chief aide-de-camp to the Tsar, had arrived at his headquarters with a letter for the Emperor.<sup>4</sup> The Prince was ordered to invent some pretext to detain him. It was not until two or three days after his arrival that he was given

<sup>1</sup> Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, I, 174) says midday; Castellane (*Journal*, I, 109) says at two o'clock; Denniée says two o'clock (p. 19); the 4th Bulletin of the Grand Army says at noon.

<sup>2</sup> "The march from Kovno to Wilna, through forests, across shifting sands, in a terrific heat and continuous, drenching rain, had caused considerable losses in men and horses. Five thousand horses perished in a distance of less than 25 leagues. It is true that this enormous loss must be chiefly attributed to the necessity of foddering the horses on green rye, which the riders had to go and cut at a distance." (Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 21.)

<sup>3</sup> General Alexander Dmitrievitch Balachoff, aide-de-camp to the Emperor of Russia and Minister of Police, born 1770, died 1857.

<sup>4</sup> Leaving Alexander on the night of the 27th-28th, Balachoff arrived at Davout's headquarters on the morning of the 28th, having met Murat and had a long conversation with him. Cf. A. Vandal, *Napoléon et Alexandre*, III, 496, and *Correspondance du Maréchal Davout*, 1885, III, 361.

leave to come to Wilna.<sup>1</sup> Our advance guard had had a lively engagement some leagues from the city, and another quite close to it. Our cavalry had not come off best, and M. de Ségur, captain of light cavalry, had been taken prisoner.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperor passed through Wilna without making himself known. The town seemed deserted. A few Jews and inhabitants of the lowest class were the only people to be found in this so-called friendly town which our troops, harassed and rationless as they were, had already treated worse than if it had been an enemy city. The Emperor did not stop on his way through. He inspected the bridge, the ground in front of the city, and magazines which the enemy had set on fire, and which were still burning. He hurried on the repairs to the bridge, gave orders for defensive outworks to be made in front of the town, and then returned thither and went to the palace. Although his return was made public, and the Household, the Headquarters, the Guard and all the paraphernalia that indicated his presence were established there, the population did not exhibit the slightest interest; not a face showed at a single window, not a sign of enthusiasm or even curiosity. Everything was gloomy.

The Emperor was struck by this, and when he entered his

<sup>1</sup> Davout, however, writes to the Major-General on June 29th: "I have received the letter from Your Highness which informs me that it is the Emperor's intention that the Emperor of Russia's aide-de-camp should be taken to Wilna by a different route from that followed by the army. I have the honour to inform you that the necessary orders have been given for this to be done." *Correspondance de Davout*, III, 361.

<sup>2</sup> Castellane (*Journal*, I, 109) thus relates the affair: "The King of Naples, after repulsing the enemy advance posts at the head of the cavalry, returned to Wilna; five rounds were fired by the guns, two hussars killed and several men wounded. Captain Octave de Ségur, of the 8th Regiment, an officer of conspicuous bravery, was wounded with two lance thrusts and fell into the enemy's hands." Octave Gabriel Henri de Ségur, son of Louis Philippe de Ségur, and brother of Philippe Paul, was born in Paris, June 30, 1779. He entered the army as a sub-lieutenant of chasseurs in 1810. He was the brother-in-law of the Countess de Ségur, *née* Rostopchin. He died, with the rank of major, August 15, 1818.

study could not help remarking: "The Poles hereabouts are not like those in Warsaw."

This was owing to some disorders that had taken place in the town and caused terror among the inhabitants; it was due also to the fact that the Poles in Wilna were content with the Russian Government and had little inclination for a change. Moreover, the Russians were not far off, and no decisive action had been fought.

The Emperor had definite information of the retreating movement of the enemy. He was amazed at their having yielded Wilna without a struggle, and that they had taken their decision in time to escape him.

It was truly heart-breaking for him to have to give up all hope of a great battle before Wilna, and he voiced his spite by crying out upon the cowardice of his foes who, he said, were playing into his own hands by covering themselves with shame in the eyes of the gallant Poles, whose country and fortunes they were thus surrendering without doing them the honour of fighting for them. He flattered himself that the Prince of Eckmühl would be more fortunate in his movements against Bagration, and that the corps which were to march on the Dwina would get into touch with the left flank of the Russians.<sup>1</sup> His first question to any officer coming to Headquarters from the various army corps was, "How many

<sup>1</sup> At the opening of the campaign the Russian forces on the Niemen were composed of three armies. The First Army of the West, commanded by Barclay, had its right wing (Wittgenstein) on the Baltic, its left wing (Doctorov) in the environs of Grodno, its headquarters at Wilna. The Second Army of the West, under Bagration, was extended from Grodno to the Muchaviee, with headquarters at Wolkowysk. The Army of the Reserve, under Tormasov, was extended beyond the Wolhynian marshes, with headquarters at Luck. Opposite these forces the French army was divided into two parts. One part composed of the corps of Davout, Oudinot, Ney, Eugène, Saint-Cyr, the Guard (Mortier) and Murat's cavalry, was under the direct orders of the Emperor. The other composed of the corps of Poniatowski, Reynier, Vandamme and the cavalry under Latour-Maubourg, was commanded by Jerome. The left wing, under Macdonald, was at Tilsit with

prisoners have been taken?" He was anxious for trophies, so as to encourage the Poles, and no one sent him any.

The Duke of Bassano and Prince Sapiéha<sup>1</sup> undertook to organize the country and raise the Poles in arms; but the inhabitants seemed little disposed to respond to the appeals made to their patriotism. The pillage and disorders of all kinds in which the army had indulged had put the whole countryside to flight. In the towns the more respectable people kept within doors. Whatever the zeal of those Poles who had come with the army, the Emperor had to send for any of the responsible persons of Wilna whom he might require, for not a soul presented himself or offered his services.

The Lithuanians were full of praise for the Tsar Alexander, and the utmost difficulty was experienced in organizing the country and inspiring the Lithuanians with any desire or feeling for the re-birth of the Polish fatherland. The disorder which followed in the wake of the army contributed not a little to the general discontent. There was a dearth of everything at Wilna, and by the end of four days it became necessary to seek the barest necessities of life at a great distance. The numbers of deserters from their units had already reached considerable proportions. Military commissions and the making of several examples frightened a number of stragglers into returning to duty, but order was only indifferently established while the army made its crossing.

The Emperor decided to summon M. Balachoff to Wilna.<sup>2</sup>

orders to operate against Riga; the right wing, under Schwarzenberg, was on the Bug. After the 26th the First Russian Army beat a retreat from Wilna on to Drissa. The Second Russian Army got into motion on the 29th and retreated from Wolkowysk to Nikoliacv. As soon as they had cleared the Niemen Napoleon sent Oudinot and Ney in pursuit of Barclay, and Davout in the direction of Minsk to separate Bagration from Barclay. (Clausewitz, *La Campagne de 1812 en Russie*.)

<sup>1</sup> Prince Sapiéha-Koswnaki, born September 3, 1773, died at Derecyn September 27, 1812. Napoleon had appointed him a member of the Commission charged with the administration of Lithuania.

<sup>2</sup> Reaching Wilna on June 30, Balachoff had been lodged in the Prince of Neuchâtel's quarters.

The way in which His Majesty spoke of M. Balachoff's mission made it seem a veritable trophy presented to the Poles, for he interpreted it as a proof of the Russian Government's embarrassment, and a source of encouragement. I only learned of his arrival from the Prince of Neuchâtel, who told me what he knew of this mission, from which we augured nothing likely to favour peace. The Emperor Napoleon said:

"My brother Alexander, who showed himself so haughty with Narbonne, already wants a settlement. He is afraid. My manoeuvres have disconcerted the Russians; before a month is over they will be on their knees to me."

He was too pleased at being in Wilna, and too anxious to flatter himself at the successes which he desired, more perhaps than he already hoped for, to enter into any arrangements. At the same time he was serious and preoccupied, one might even say gloomy. From some remarks that escaped him it was clear that this retreat without battle after the crossing of the Niemen, the losses sustained during the march on Wilna and, above all, the very physiognomy of the landscape, had given rise to thoughts which hardly accorded with the illusions which the Emperor had so long cherished. But he was not a man to shrink from difficulties; they irritated rather than discouraged that great nature. He said aloud (doubtless for the benefit of idle onlookers, to prepare them for the reception he was going to give M. Balachoff, so different from that anticipated after his gibes about the supposed reason for his mission) that he was waging a political war on Russia, and that, having no personal grievance against the Emperor Alexander, he would treat his aide-de-camp well.

M. de Balachoff brought a letter from the Tsar Alexander, and also instructions, in accordance with its contents, to demand the reasons for this invasion in times of absolute peace without the preliminary of any declaration of war. He was also to propose, in the absence of any known grievance based on misunderstanding between the two States, to exchange explanations and to avoid war if the Emperor Napoleon would retire to his positions behind the Niemen pending the issue of negotiations. To a few who were initiated into the secret of

this proposal it was apparent that the rapidity of our movements had from the outset disconcerted and upset the military dispositions of the Russians, and that, embarrassed and doubtful as to his being able to rally Bagration's Corps in front of the Dwina, the Tsar Alexander was trying to delay our advance by any means or negotiations into which he could persuade us to enter. I am repeating what I heard said, for at the time I had no personal knowledge of the matter. I do know, however, that in the presence of the Prince of Neuchâtel, the Duke of Istria, myself and, I think, Duroc, the Emperor Napoleon observed in a loud voice:

“Alexander is laughing at me. Does he imagine that I have come to Wilna to negotiate trade treaties? I have come to finish off, once and for all, the colossus of the barbarians of the North. The sword is drawn. They must be thrust back into their snow and ice so that for a quarter of a century at least they will not be able to interfere with civilized Europe. Even in the days of Catherine,” he added, “the Russians counted for little or nothing in the politics of Europe. It was the partition of Poland which gave them contact with civilization. The time has come when Poland, in her turn, must force them back. Do the battles of Austerlitz, of Friedland, or the Peace of Tilsit give ground for the claims of my brother Alexander? We must seize this chance and teach the Russians an unpleasant lesson about their say in what happens in Germany. I consent to their admitting the English to Archangel, but the Baltic should be closed to them. Why did not Alexander explain himself to Narbonne or to Lauriston, who was at Petersburg and whom he would not receive at Wilna.<sup>1</sup> Up to the very last Rumiantsof has refused to believe in the possibility of war. He has persuaded Alexander that our movements were merely threats, that the maintenance of the alliance was too much in my interest for me to be determined on war.

<sup>1</sup> Lauriston was still at Petersburg when he received a letter dated Dresden, May 20, 1812, instructing him to proceed to the Tsar's headquarters and ask for explanations. On June 19th Napoleon had heard at Gumbinnen that the Tsar had refused to receive this ambassador, and had forbidden him to go to Wilna.

He thought that he had fathomed me, that he was more subtle than I am diplomatic. Now that the Tsar sees that it is a serious matter, and that his army has been cut in two, he is afraid and wants to come to terms; but I will sign the Peace at Moscow. I do not intend that the Petersburg cabinet shall think that they have the right to concern themselves with my actions in Germany, nor that their ambassador should dare to threaten me if I do not evacuate Danzig.<sup>1</sup> Everyone has his turn. The time has passed when Catherine split up Poland, and made the feeble Louis XV shake in his shoes at Versailles, or when she had all the gossip of Paris pointing fingers at her. Since Erfurt Alexander has become too haughty. The acquisition of Finland has turned his head. If he must have victories, let him defeat the Persians, but don't let him meddle in the affairs of Europe. Civilization rejects these people of the North; Europe must settle its own affairs without them."

M. de Balachoff was well received by the Emperor,<sup>2</sup> who invited him to dinner, together with the Prince of Neuchâtel, the Duke of Istria, and myself.<sup>3</sup> I was more than astounded at this compliment, but it could not have been paid me on my own account, the Emperor having long since accustomed me not to expect any favours which he could possibly refrain from granting to those in his entourage. The Emperor treated M. de Balachoff perfectly and spoke freely to him.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to Kurakin's letter of April 30th.

<sup>2</sup> Balachoff was received for the first time by Napoleon at the Imperial Palace at 10 o'clock on July 1st. He has left a circumstantial account of his mission, published by the *Recueil de l'Académie des Sciences de Saint-Petersbourg*, 1882, parts of which have been incorporated in Tatischeff's *Alexandre I et Napoléon*, p. 590 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> This dinner was given at 7 o'clock on July 1st. Duroc was also a guest. (Balachoff's report.)

<sup>4</sup> It was during this dinner that Balachoff, when Napoleon asked him which was the road to Moscow, made the famous reply: "The Russians say, like the French, that all roads lead to Rome. The road to Moscow is a matter of choice; Charles XII went thither by Pultowa."

In the conversation after dinner His Majesty observed, apostrophizing me:

"The Tsar Alexander treats ambassadors accredited to him well. He imagines that he can pursue his policy by means of cajolery. He has turned Caulaincourt into a real Russian."

It was the customary reproach. As he could not harm me in the eyes of my countrymen, who knew me well enough to appreciate the value of this kind of reproach as well as I did, I paid no heed to it. But when it was repeated with the obvious intention of commanding me to the good graces of the Emperor Alexander, the words grated on me, and I could not refrain from answering the Emperor with some warmth:

"It is doubtless because my freedom of speech has too successfully proved to Your Majesty that I am a very good Frenchman that you can pretend to doubt it. The marks of kindness with which the Tsar Alexander so often honoured me were in reality addressed to Your Majesty. As your faithful servant, Sire, I shall never forget them."

The Emperor, observing my irritation, changed the subject, and shortly afterwards dismissed M. de Balachoff.

Before dinner the Emperor had instructed me to see this general and inform him that he would be given horses to enable him to rejoin the Russian army, and had likewise ordered me to arrange with him as to his route and the escort he would require. I only saw him for a moment, when I prayed him to lay the homage of my respect at the feet of his sovereign.

M. de Balachoff having left the Emperor's presence, His Majesty said to me, jokingly, that I was wrong to be incensed at his remarks about my having turned Russian; it was only a trick on his part to prove to the Tsar that I had not forgotten his tokens of goodwill.

"You torment yourself," added the Emperor, "by considering the harm I shall do your friend. His armies dare not await us; they will no more save the honour of his arms than they will that of his cabinet. Before two months are out the Russian nobility will force Alexander to sue for peace."

To his usual grievances he added many other matters to prove to the Prince of Neuchâtel, the Duke of Istria, Duroc, and (I think) one or two of his aides-de-camp who were present, that I opposed this war and condemned his system. Several times he repeated that this war was the most politic war he had ever undertaken, that Russia had done nothing for the alliance since Tilsit, that she had given little or no help in the Austrian campaign. He complained of her protecting English trade. He tried to prove that Austria viewed the war with favour, because she hoped that her maritime provinces would be given back to her rather than to Poland, in whom she had no interest whatever.<sup>1</sup>

So outraged was I at the reproach, "You are a Russian," that I could not contain myself. I answered the Emperor that I was a better Frenchmen than those who extolled this war; that I had always told him the truth when others, in hopes of pleasing him, merely told him tales to excite his feelings. I added that, knowing the respect I owed to my sovereign, I took his pleasantries in good part when only my countrymen were present, for I already possessed their esteem; but it was an outrage to doubt my fidelity and patriotism before a foreigner. Since the Emperor had published the fact, I said, I was proud to be against this war, to have done all I could to prevent it, and I even felt honoured at the disagreeableness and vexations which my attitude had brought me. I concluded by saying that, having for a long time seen that my services were no longer acceptable to him, I begged permission to retire; but as I could not honourably go into private life while the war lasted, I begged him to give me a command in Spain and permission to start on the morrow.

The Emperor answered me very quietly.

"Who is doubting your fidelity? I know well enough that you are a man of worth. I was only joking. You are too touchy; you know perfectly well that I hold you in esteem. You are at present talking foolishly, and I shall not reply to what you are saying," etc., etc.

I was, I confess, so beside myself that, far from growing

<sup>1</sup> See Ségur's account of this scene, *Histoire et Mémoires*, IV, 170.

calmer, I was on the verge of saying the most unbecoming things to the Emperor.

The Duke of Istria pulled one tail of my coat, the Prince of Neuchâtel the other, and between them they drew me aside and begged me to retort no more. The Emperor, who kept his patience, and spoke, I am bound to admit, with the same kindness, seeing that I was beyond listening to reason, retired to his study and left me to those gentlemen who tried vainly to lead me away and calm me. I had lost my head completely. At last I reached my quarters, firmly resolved to take my departure, and I did not retire to bed until I had put all my affairs in order and left everything arranged for my departure.

Very early the next morning I asked Duroc to take over my duties and receive the Emperor's orders. In vain did he remonstrate with me. A little later the Prince of Neuchâtel and Duroc came in succession from the Emperor, who, not seeing me in the bedchamber at his rising, charged them to tell me that he did not want to hear any more about my going. But I persisted in my desire to be gone. Not seeing me when he mounted his horse, the Emperor sent for me twice, but I was not to be found. I wished to avoid the embarrassment of answering people to whom it was unfitting that I should enter into explanations of my refusal to attend His Majesty.

Seeing that I did not appear, the Emperor, having taken some turns about the town and stopping by the bridge, gave orders that I should be sought and found and told that his orders were that I should go and speak to him. I could not refuse obedience, and I joined him whilst he was inspecting the outworks in front of Wilna.

As soon as I presented myself he pinched my ear (this was his habitual sign of friendliness).

"Are you mad, wanting to leave me?" he said. "I esteem you, as you know, and had no wish to hurt your feelings."

Whereupon he galloped off, pulled up soon afterwards, and began to speak of many other matters. Neither Duroc nor

I could come to any other decision or say anything else, except that it was impossible to leave him.

M. de Bassano, and others charged with organizing the country, vaunted their pretended enthusiasm. I lived, as usual, in the closest retirement. My discussion with the Emperor had made me even more circumspect. I am obliged to say, however, that he disclosed nothing further in this connection. Everyone brought me word of what was going on; besides, it was only necessary to have a pair of ears when one was in the ante-rooms, or during the Emperor's excursions, to learn whatever there was to know. Everyone saw what the Lithuanians were like: very cold towards the Polish cause, by no means ready to make any sacrifices, very discontented at the inconveniences of a military occupation and the disorders inseparable from such rapid movements. Probably they would have been pleased to see the restoration of Poland, but they had doubts whether this was the Emperor's sole aim, and above all, that it would result in a form of government agreeable to their claims and pretensions, their interests, and their habits. Nevertheless a commission of government was organized.

The Diet of Warsaw, which met on June 24th<sup>1</sup> as a general Confederation, called the Poles to arms and summoned them to desert the standards of the oppressors whom they were serving. It sent a deputation to Wilna to lay its wishes and desires before the Emperor, and also to stimulate the Lithuanians. The Emperor's reply to their address treated Galicia as no part of Poland, and was so evasive that it chilled and dissatisfied the most zealous.<sup>2</sup>

It is easy to judge of its effect on those who were not at all zealous. In the Emperor's reply everybody sought to find what he desired to find in it. Wiseacres perceived an indication of indecision and, consequently, a proof that the Emperor had not yet made up his mind about Poland, and that in certain

<sup>1</sup> Presided over by Prince Adam Czartoriski, Grand Marshal. See *Histoire de l'ambassade dans le grand-duché de Varsovie en 1812*, by M. de Pradt, Paris, 1816, p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> This deputation was received by the Emperor on July 11, 1812.

circumstances, which might be brought about by military events, this restoration, being no *sine qua non*, would not be an obstacle to peace. It was also sought to prove from this reply that the Emperor perceived that the Lithuanians were far from enthusiastic, and considered that the way in which the Russians had started the campaign was likely to keep the question open longer than he had hoped; so he did not wish to tie his hands. These ideas made the well-informed, and many others as well, smile, for those who disapproved of this unfortunate campaign were many, even at its outset.

The Emperor showed incredible activity during his stay at Wilna. Twenty-four hours did not give him a long enough day. Aides-de-camp, orderly officers, staff officers, were constantly on the roads. He waited with insatiable impatience for reports from the corps on the march. His first words to all who arrived were invariably, "How many prisoners have been taken?"

To his great regret none of the skirmishes led to any result. He flattered himself, with reason, that the Prince of Eckmühl would come to grips with Prince Bagration, and rejoiced at seeing old Suvaroff's right hand at grips with the most tenacious of his own lieutenants. He was extremely annoyed at the ill-fought skirmish of the King of Naple's advance guard with the enemy cavalry,<sup>1</sup> in which General de Saint-Geniès and a considerable number of men were captured.<sup>2</sup> All this time our left was gaining ground. The Emperor's plans were taking shape, and on July 17th<sup>3</sup> he left Wilna to join his Guard at Swenziany.

There the Emperor received despatches from the King of Naples giving details of the check to his cavalry. At the same time the King announced the evacuation by the Russians of

<sup>1</sup> On July 15th the outposts of one of our brigades had been surprised and captured by one of Wittgenstein's corps.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Marie Nöel de l'Isle de Falcon de Saint-Geniès, born at Montauban, December 25, 1773, had been general of brigade since August 6, 1811. He was promoted lieutenant-general on December 31, 1835, and died at Vernon (Indre-et-Loire), March 28, 1839.

<sup>3</sup> More exactly, at 11 o'clock on the night of July 16th.

the entrenched camp at Drissa on July 18th,<sup>1</sup> and the general retreat of the Russian army, which had abandoned all its positions and the works upon which it had been labouring for two years. This was inevitable, for Bagration would have been cut off from Barclay and the southern provinces<sup>2</sup> if he had not hastened to take this step. The Emperor had long predicted it, and it augured well; the news went to his head, and at the same time kindled the enthusiasm of those who were most cold towards the Polish Cause, as it was called at headquarters.

His Majesty at once decided to go to Gloubokoje, and the Guard was immediately despatched towards that place. The Emperor spent twelve hours at Swenziany to dictate orders, and marched the whole of that night in the hope that, by the rapidity of this movement, he would make contact with the Russian army. In the morning he arrived at Gloubokoje,<sup>3</sup> a fine monastery in a very fertile stretch of country. This astounding march from Wilna to Gloubokoje proved that horses well ridden can cover a surprising distance, for the mounted chargers and the animals laden with heavy packs left Wilna at six o'clock in the morning, reached Swenziany at eight o'clock in the evening, and by noon of the following day were at Gloubokoje, having thus covered forty-eight leagues. The saddle-horses made the journey of six (?) leagues from Swenziany to Globokoje in eighteen hours without one falling sick.

The King of Naples, who commanded the advance guard, was on the Dwina. Various cavalry skirmishes with mixed success had followed that ill-performed reconnaissance which had cost us General de Saint-Geniès and many officers. The

<sup>1</sup> It was on July 16th that Barclay evacuated the Drissa camp, falling back along the Moscow road on Witepsk. (Clausewitz, p. 43.)

<sup>2</sup> Leaving Niewicz on July 13th, Bagration crossed the Beresina at Bobruisk and reached the Dnieper at Staroi Bychov on the 21st. (Clausewitz, p. 43.)

<sup>3</sup> According to Castellane (*Journal*, I, 117) the Emperor reached the convent of Gloubokoje at two o'clock in the afternoon of the 18th.

Russian army, having concealed its line of retreat, was able to effect it without being harassed, but the Marshal Prince of Eckmühl, by his rapid march on Mohilew,<sup>1</sup> had cut off the retreat of Prince Bagration who engaged in a lively battle with the advance guard at Salta-Nowka in a vain attempt to reopen his communications.<sup>2</sup>

Having failed in doing this, after futile efforts in which he lost from four to five thousand men, he decided to attempt a new detour to get into touch with the main army, but was not able to rejoin it until they reached Smolensk.<sup>3</sup> This affair was very costly in men, principally to the Russians, but very few prisoners were taken.<sup>4</sup>

It was ascertained at the same time that the Tsar Alexander had left Polotsk on July 18th, and his army some days previously; also that he had gone on to Moscow to call the nation to arms.<sup>5</sup> It was thought that he had left the army in order to escape the responsibility of subsequent military happenings, since its earlier movements had been unfortunate in that the forces had been separated and obliged to evacuate the great entrenched camp at Drissa, which was looked upon in Russia as an invincible barrier if held by sufficient troops. Everything

<sup>1</sup> On leaving Minsk on July 14th Davout marched at first to Borisow. On the 20th he reached Mohilew and stayed there until July 29th.

<sup>2</sup> This battle was fought on July 23rd. See the account in Davout's report, dated from Dobrowna, August 7, 1812. (*Correspondance de Davout*, III, 375.)

<sup>3</sup> Bagration passed the Dnieper on July 24th and retired on Mstislawi, then on Smolensk, where he arrived on August 4th, some days later than Barclay.

<sup>4</sup> The enemy "left on the field upwards of 1200 dead and more than 4000 wounded, of which seven or eight hundred are in our hands, as well as one hundred and fifty to two hundred prisoners. (Davout to Berthier, August 7, 1812. *Correspondance de Davout*, III, 378.)

<sup>5</sup> Alexander I, who held no actual command himself, left for Moscow on July 14th at the instance of his generals, who were apprehensive of his incapacity. (Cf. K. Waliszewski, *Le Règne d'Alexandre I* II, 59.)

seemed to indicate that the corps were far from being up to strength, as was supposed, and as they might easily have been if, as the Emperor said, the Russian chiefs and commissariat had not put a quarter of the army into their own pockets.<sup>1</sup> It was also learned that a ukase had been issued for calling to the colours one man in every hundred, as well as two proclamations by the Tsar Alexander, one to the Russian nation and the other to the people of the city of Moscow, which could leave no manner of doubt as to the desire to make the war a national one. Printed notices, signed by Barclay and tossed to our outposts, proved that he was not even scrupulous as to the means he would employ, for the French and Germans were asked to desert their standards and settle in Russia.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperor appeared amazed at this.

"My brother Alexander stops at nothing," he said. "If I liked, I too could promise his peasants freedom.<sup>3</sup> He has

<sup>1</sup> "It was said—even at the very moment when the Russian army on the frontier numbered no more than 180,000—that the Emperor Alexander had on his pay-roll no less than 600,000 men. This statement, which Clausewitz considered at the time as a piece of ironical exaggeration although it had been told him by a high official, was really the actual truth." (Clausewitz, *La Campagne de 1812*, 9. Cf. Stein, *Geschichte des Russischen Heeres*, 223.)

<sup>2</sup> The text of this address from the Russians to the French soldiers is to be found in the *Journal de l'Empire*, issue of August 6, 1812, and in Chuquet, *La Guerre de Russie*, 1912-35. It said explicitly, "go home, or if you wish while waiting to do so to find a refuge in Russia, you will there forget all about conscription, about the 'levée de ban' and 'arrière ban,' and all that military tyranny which does not permit you for one moment to elude its yoke." Napoleon's answer was to print the "reply of a French grenadier," which Chuquet also published, as well as the appeal to the Germans, and "the reply of a German."

<sup>3</sup> In his reply to the address of the Senate of December 20, 1812, Napoleon returned to this idea: "I should have been able to arm the greater part of his population against him had I proclaimed the freedom of the Serfs. A great number of villages asked me for it. But when I got to know the brutishness of that very numerous class of the Russian people I refused to grant a measure which would have been the sentence of death to many families and would have involved them in utter ruin and consigned them to the most horrible torture." (*Correspondance*, 19389.)

been deceived as to the strength of his army; he does not know how to employ it; and he does not want to make peace; he is not consistent. A man who is not the strongest should be the most politic, and his policy should be to make an end."

The Emperor was at the peak of delight when he learned of the evacuation of the camp at Drissa, which the Russians had taken two years to fortify. Alexander's departure thence seemed to him a great success. He rightly attributed it to his own rapid movements, which had prevented the joining up of the various corps of the whole army, and had obliged it to evacuate the camp without a battle in order to seek a rallying point further away. Now, he said, he could choose between Moscow and Petersburg, if Russia did not sue for peace. By rapid manoeuvres he hoped to force the Russian army to give battle as he desired, or else to demoralize and undermine them by continual retreat without fighting. He added that Bagration's corps would not join the main army, that it would be captured, or anyhow be partially destroyed, and that this would cause a great sensation in Russia, as that general was one of Suvaroff's old comrades in arms. The Emperor had quickly decided on his movement against Witepsk in the hope of forcing the Russian army to fight in defence of that town and await Bagration, whom the Prince of Eckmühl continued to press so closely. His Majesty left Gloubokojé on the 21st, and slept at Kamen on the 23rd. The hussars of the Russian Guard suffered severely in an affair with our advance guard near Beschenkowitschi.<sup>1</sup> It was on reaching that small town on the 24th that the Emperor noticed what we had already observed for two days past, that all the inhabitants had fled, leaving their houses absolutely deserted, and that everything went to prove that this migration was in accordance with a definite system carried out under orders recently given by the government.

From Beschenkowitschi to beyond Witepsk we were always in bivouac or under canvas.

<sup>1</sup> Actually this battle was fought on July 25th. Murat found himself opposed by Tolstoi-Osterniann's corps, charged with covering Barclay's right on the march from Witepsk on Orcha.

The Emperor was so anxious for a battle that he pressed forward the movements of the army with all his energy and all the brilliance of his genius. The battle of Ostrowno,<sup>1</sup> after Beschenkowitschi, was quite costly, and sufficiently advantageous, but it was nevertheless only a rear-guard action in which the enemy really obtained the result he desired, in that he hindered our movement, forced us to make fresh dispositions, and in consequence delayed us for several hours.

The Russians were pushed as far as the Lutchiesa, a stream that flows into the Dwina a short distance from Witopsk. During the night all the corps and artillery reserves were hurried forward, and everything was got ready in the hope that on the morrow, or at latest the following day, the great battle would be fought which had so long been the goal of all the Emperor's wishes and hopes. His Majesty remained in the saddle during part of the night, pressing forward the march, urging and encouraging the troops, who were all full of ardour. The King of Naples assured us that all the enemy movements indicated dispositions for a battle. The Emperor and the whole army were so anxious for this that they could not but flatter themselves that this great objective was about to be attained.

The Emperor was on horseback before daybreak (on the 27th), and the reconnaissances pushed as far as Lutchiesa found a strong body of enemy cavalry in position. Our infantry arrived. Two regiments had already crossed the bridge but were waiting on a plateau, a little in advance and to the right, until the artillery and the remainder of the cavalry should join them. The enemy deployed considerable masses of cavalry, which bore down on the weak regiments of light troops that composed our advance-guard, who were formed in two lines, to the left of the road and in front of the gully. Our cavalry regiments reached them, but could not form up quickly enough to make headway against the masses of men already engaged with our advance guard, over which the enemy gained at the outset an easy success.

During this time a company of light infantry, detached

<sup>1</sup> July 26th. Eugène and Murat against Konownitzin.

from our left to support the small strength of our cavalry, proved what the resolution of this admirable branch of infantry can do, even when it is cut off.<sup>1</sup> Placed along the stream and in some bushes and houses in front of the gully, these brave fellows were surrounded by a cloud of cavalry against which they kept up a constant fire in support of our feeble squadrons. They kept up a continuous fire, and emptied many saddles among the enemy, doing such damage that by degrees they forced him off the flank of our squadrons, who would have been seriously threatened from the onset of the attack had it not been for this valuable help. Several times we saw five or six of these light infantrymen stand together some fifty paces from the enemy squadrons, and when the cavalry swept on to them, stand back-to-back, holding their fire waiting for them at point-blank range. They even took some prisoners. This company played a great part in the events of the day. The Emperor said to several of them, who brought him prisoners and asked for the Cross: "You are all brave lads, and you all deserve it." Indeed, guerilla warfare had never been fought with more intelligence or boldness. These brave fellows were the object of the whole army's admiration; some were slain, many wounded, but even these, unless totally disabled, were unwilling to leave their comrades. I cannot describe how deeply I regret having lost, among other notes relative to the retreat, the names of the officers and non-commissioned officers, and even the number, of this gallant regiment.

After this action, which delayed our movements even further, the army again began to advance, and on the morrow we found ourselves in presence of the enemy, who was occupying the heights crowning a great plateau in front of Witepsk.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to a company of the 9th of the Line, commanded by Captains Guyard and Savary (*Fain, Manuscrit de 1812*, I, 285; and *Labaume, Rélation Circonstanciée de la Campagne de Russie*, Paris, 1815, 71). This feat of arms was performed on July 27th. The 10th bulletin dated from Witepsk, July 31, 1812, having narrated the events, adds: "struck by their fine bearing, he (Napoleon) sent to ask what corps it was. They answered 'the 9th, and three-quarters of them lads of Paris!'"—"Tell them," said the Emperor, "that they are fine lads; every man of them deserves the Cross."

We were separated only by the Lutchiesa and our outposts at the foot of the plateau. The day was spent in manoeuvring, bombarding, and minor attacks to test and adjust our respective positions in preparation for the great battle for which the Emperor and the majority of the French were hoping on the morrow. The Emperor was cheerful and already beaming with pride, so confident was he of measuring his strength with the enemy and obtaining a result that should give some colour to his already too-distant expedition. He spent the day in the saddle, reconnoitred the terrain in every direction, even at a considerable distance, and returned to his tent very late,<sup>1</sup> having actually seen and checked everything for himself.

It is impossible to give any idea of the general disappointment—especially the Emperor's disappointment—when, at daybreak<sup>2</sup> the certainty was borne in upon us that the Russian army had vanished and abandoned Witepsk. Not a soul was to be found, not even a peasant, who could indicate the direction taken by the enemy, for they had not passed through the town.

For some hours we had to act like huntsmen and follow up in every direction the track they had taken. What was the use? What route had his masses of men and artillery followed? No one knew, and for some hours no one could know, for there were signs of them in every direction. Moreover, the Emperor at first only sent out his advance-guards. He examined closely, and more than once, every locality of the enemy's positions, especially those where he had bivouacked and camped, so that he might estimate their exact strength. He obtained all the information he could in front of Witepsk, and then entered the town at eleven o'clock to see if he could discover details as to the strength, movements and

<sup>1</sup> He installed himself near a burnt mill, not far from Lutchiesa. (Schuerman's *Itinéraire Général de Napoléon*, 305.)

<sup>2</sup> July 28th. At first Barclay decided to give battle, but he retreated during the night of the 27-28th, after receiving a courier from Bagration informing him that that general was making for Smolensk.

plans of the Russians; but he was unable to obtain any satisfactory enlightenment. He passed rapidly through the streets and outside the town, and then rejoined his Guard, which, like the rest of the troops, was already on the march along the road to Smolensk. He flattered himself that the enemy's rear-guard would be caught up, and in consequence he hastened forward the movement of all troops in the van, at the same time asking the King of Naples to secure some prisoners at all costs and send them to him. But through negligence our advance-guard<sup>1</sup> fell into an ambush near Lochesna; we lost some men, and positions were seized on both sides. The troops were harassed. Many of the horses of the advance guard had been unable to stay the charge, and so involved the loss of their riders. The Emperor bivouacked at Lochesna<sup>2</sup> with the Guard and remained there through part of the following day<sup>3</sup> waiting for news.

But there were no inhabitants to be found, no prisoners to be taken, not a single straggler to be picked up. There were no spies. We were in the heart of inhabited Russia and yet, if I may be permitted the comparison, we were like a vessel without a compass in the midst of a vast ocean, knowing nothing of what was happening around us. At last it was learned from two peasants<sup>4</sup> who were caught that the Russian army was far ahead of us, and that it had been on the move for four days.

For more than an hour the Emperor remained undecided.

"Perhaps the Russians want to give battle at Smolensk," he said. "Bagration has not yet joined up with them; we must attack them."

<sup>1</sup> Fourth Corps (Eugène).

<sup>2</sup> A farm near the village of Agaponowsczyna, seven leagues from Witepsk, on the Smolensk road. The Emperor slept under canvas.

<sup>3</sup> July 29th.

<sup>4</sup> One of them had been found asleep beneath a bush by Colonel Klicki. (Labaume, *Relation*, 77.)

At last he decided to give the army a much-needed rest. Part of the cavalry was already worn out, the artillery and infantry were exhausted, the roads were covered with stragglers who destroyed and wasted everything. It was indispensable to organize our rear and await the result of the operations undertaken by the corps that had remained on the Dwina. The certainty that the Russian army was going to escape him, and that he would not, for some time, obtain the battle he desired so keenly, cast the Emperor into deep gloom. Eventually he resigned himself to the necessity of returning to Witepsk.

As I have said, our cavalry and artillery had already suffered severely. A very large number of horses had died. Many were lagging behind, wasting away, wandering at the rear; others followed their corps, to whom they were but a useless embarrassment. A considerable number of ammunition wagons and other vehicles had been abandoned one after the other. One-third of the horses were missing; not more than half of those we had had at the beginning of the campaign were still in service.

It was at Lochesna, on the evening of that skirmish with the Cossacks, that I heard the Emperor make his first reflections on the new method of warfare adopted by the Russians. Above all he was vexed that no prisoners had been taken in our engagements with the enemy, as this deprived him of any positive information as to their movements. With the exception of the Jesuits, all the better-class inhabitants of the town had fled, and their houses were deserted. The few people who had stayed in Witepsk belonged to the lowest classes and had seen nothing, heard nothing. That evening the corps commanders were summoned to the Emperor's tent, and to some extent reprimanded for not having taken measures to capture prisoners in the minor affrays of the advance-guard. They asserted, as we already knew and as we and the Prince of Neuchâtel had told the incredulous Emperor, that the cavalry chargers were so worn out that they could no longer go at the gallop, so that the men were forced to dismount and save

themselves on foot if their squadrons were forced back in a charge.

The King of Naples was better able to appreciate these troubles than anyone, and he told us all about them when he chatted with us. He even ventured to make some remarks to this effect to the Emperor, but His Majesty did not care for reflections that ran counter to his projects, and lent a deaf ear. He changed the subject, and the King of Naples, who above all wished to please him, and by so doing flatter his own vanity, kept to himself the wise reflections which he had voiced to us alone, and soon forgot everything. Always at the forefront of the skirmishers, and eager to thrust his plumes and bizarre uniform beneath the very noses of the Cossacks, he brought about the ruin of the cavalry and ended by causing the loss of the army, and brought France and the Emperor to the brink of an abyss.

One day, however, General Belliard, chief of staff to the King of Naples, observed in his presence to the Emperor, who was questioning him :

“Your Majesty must be told the truth. The cavalry is rapidly disappearing ; the marches are too long and exhausting, and when a charge is ordered you can see the brave fellows are forced to stay behind because their horses cannot be put to the gallop.”

The Emperor paid no attention to these prudent observations. He wanted to reach his prey, and in his view it was evidently worth paying any price to obtain this object, for to that end he sacrificed everything.

While these events befell the Grand Army, the King of Westphalia, detached for the support of the Prince of Eckmühl’s Corps, let his troops pillage the Duchy of Warsaw, of which he flattered himself he was the governor, and drove that loyal country into discontent. Like a good many other people he imagined that the Poland which the Emperor wished to revive, this buffer State which he wished to create, had already come into being. The King of Westphalia, as I say, thought it beneath his dignity to serve under the victor of Auerstadt and Eckmühl, so he left the Grand Army and

returned to Cassel<sup>1</sup> with his guard. Such was the support given to the Emperor in sore straits by the brothers whom he had made kings. According to the Emperor, the King was the cause of the Prince of Eckmühl's failure to carry out his operations successfully, for he enabled Bagration to escape, and thus brought about the initial failure of the campaign. I am repeating what I heard the Emperor say on several occasions, and what the Prince of Neuchâtel told me, later to be confirmed by the Prince of Eckmühl.

The Emperor had left the Prince of Eckmühl only a portion of his Corps; the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Divisions, commanded by Generals Morand, Gudin and Friant, had been placed under the orders of the King of Naples after the crossing of the Niemen, for the purpose of following up the enemy and supporting our cavalry. The Prince was left with only the Companys and Desaix Divisions, and half of the latter had been left by him for observation at Minsk.<sup>2</sup> As soon as the Emperor understood the Russian movements, and saw that Bagration's Corps had been separated from the main army, he threw the Prince against Bagration's Army Corps with the few troops

<sup>1</sup> On July 6th the Emperor ordered that in the event of the 5th, 7th, and 8th Army Corps and the 4th Reserve Corps of Cavalry being put with Davout's Corps, the command of the whole would devolve on the latter (*Correspondance*, 18911). Davout communicated this order to Jerome on the 14th, announcing that he would assume command of the united corps. That same evening the King of Westphalia wrote to his brother that he "had resolved not to serve under anyone but him." On the 16th he left his headquarters at Newij with his bodyguard, sleeping at Turczec. From there he went in the direction of Cassel, where he arrived on August 16th. (*Mémoires et Correspondance du roi Jérôme*, V., 414.)

<sup>2</sup> The Marshal took up his position at Salta-Nowka. His troops, though far outnumbered, covered themselves with glory, notably the 61st Regiment. During this period the first three divisions of the 1st Corps reached the Dwina. That night the first division took the transport of Doctorov's Division between Mikaclesi and Svir, and would have done much more damage had not an order from the Emperor, which was recalled thirty-six hours later, caused them to lose three marches. (*Note by Caulaincourt*.) The battle of Salta-Nowka was fought on July 23rd.

he had at his disposal (a division and a half),<sup>1</sup> but at the same time informed him that he was putting the King of Westphalia and his Corps at his disposal, as well as Poniatowski's Poles who were following it. The Prince, realizing the importance of the operation the Emperor had entrusted to him, pressed forward, knowing that Bagration had long and difficult defiles to traverse between extensive marshes, and resolved to forestall him at the end of these defiles, even if only with the head of his column. He accordingly informed the King of his intended movement, told him what he knew and what he planned, at the same time requesting him to inform Poniatowski and to press Bagration, who had lost three days at Neswiji and time in counter-marching, and could thus be drawn between two fires. But the King was disgruntled at finding himself under the orders of the Prince of Eckmühl; and without regard to the circumstances, or to the character of a man who had won such battles and to whom he even owed his crown, lost his temper and neglected to obey these orders, heedless of the consequences which his disobedience would bring on his brother and the Prince. He did not even pass on the orders to Poniatowski, who might have carried them out, at least in part. Not only did the King give a cold reception to the officer who handed him the orders, but he even permitted himself to pass unsuitable comments upon them, and as I have said, took himself off with his Guard. As he had planned, the Prince fell on the convoys and parks that preceded Bagration's march, captured a considerable part of them, took some prisoners, and continued his movement without encumbering himself with his captures, so as to be in position before the Russians could debouch.

Not being in sufficient force, after the King's departure, to give battle in open country, the Prince proceeded to take up his position before Mohilew,<sup>2</sup> towards which town Bagration

<sup>1</sup> Besides the 57th, 61st and 111th Regiments of the Compans Division, and the 85th and 108th of the Desaix Division, Davout had the Valence Division and the 3rd Chasseurs. (*Correspondance de Davout*, III, 376.)

<sup>2</sup> July 20th, 1812.

was heading; for the King of Westphalia's disobedience had saved him by facilitating his change of route. Knowing that he had only to deal with the weak corps hurriedly mustered by the Prince, and that no one was pressing him, Bagration had the insolence to send an aide-de-camp to the Prince of Eckmühl to say that for some days he had been deceived by the Prince's activity, but that now he knew there was only the head of column to oppose him, and to avoid a useless engagement he informed him that he intended to sleep the following night in Mohilew. Instead of replying to this boastful impertinence, the Prince strengthened his position as best he could. At the outset of the engagement success was evenly divided; but, attacked with vigour, the Prince put up a brave defence; and eventually put four or five thousand of Bagration's men out of action, and forced him to retire and change his direction during the night.<sup>1</sup>

When it is considered what an effect on subsequent events this destruction of Bagration's corps might have had, and the result that might have been obtained at the outset of the campaign by this first manoeuvre of the Emperor and the masterly strategy of the Prince, it is impossible not to feel pity at the sight of that great captain betrayed by his own relations, before being betrayed in the end by fortune.

On his return to Witcansk<sup>2</sup> the Emperor's first care was for provisions and hospitals. I was given the duty of visiting them, distributing money to the wounded, consoling them and encouraging them.

I fulfilled this sad mission to the best of my ability, nor was it without its dangers, for infection was rife. The unfortunate men were in the direst want, lying on the ground, for the most part without even straw beneath them, and all in the most unfavourable conditions. A great number of them, even officers, had not had their wounds dressed, churches and warehouses were all full; and at first sick men and wounded were mixed together. The surgeons and doctors, far too few in number, were unable to cope with the needs of the service;

<sup>1</sup> July 23rd. Salta-Nowka.

<sup>2</sup> Caulaincourt's narrative returns to July 29th.

besides, they were without requisites; there was neither linen nor medicine. With the exception of the Guard, who had preserved some supplies, the ambulances lacked even the cases of instruments, which had been left at the rear and lost in the wagons abandoned by the roadside when their horses died. It had been hoped to obtain some supplies at Witepsk, but the place was practically deserted. Moreover, the capital cities of these great Russian provinces were of less use than the smallest towns in Germany. Too much accustomed to relying upon the resources of the country, we had reckoned on being able to do the same in Russia. The disappointment was great, and very bitter for these poor wretches, who were forced to suffer without any means being found to relieve them. It is impossible to give any idea of the utter want experienced at first. The lack of order, the indiscipline of the troops and even of the Guard, robbed us of the few means that remained at our disposal. Never was there a situation more deplorable, or a spectacle more heart-rending for those who could think, and who had not been dazzled by the false glamour of glory and ambition. With the exception of the chiefs, the indifference of the administrations was complete. The innumerable wagons, the enormous quantity of supplies of all sorts that had been collected at such expense during the course of two years, had vanished through theft and loss, or through lack of means to bring them up. They were scattered along the roads. The rapidity of the forced marches, the shortage of harness and spare parts, the dearth of provisions, the want of care, had all helped to kill the horses. This campaign at express speed from the Niemen to Wilna, and from Wilna to Witepsk, had, without any real result, already cost the army two lost battles and deprived it of absolutely essential provisions and supplies.

To ensure that no indiscreet word should be uttered the Emperor consulted no one. Consequently our wagons and all our transport, built for metalled roads and to accomplish ordinary distances, were in no way suitable for the roads of the country we had to traverse. The first sand we came across overwhelmed the horses, for instead of the loads being

diminished in proportion to the weight of the vehicle and the distance to be covered, they had been increased, in the notion that the daily consumption would sufficiently lessen them. But in working out this scheme of daily consumption the Emperor had not taken into account the distance that would have to be covered before the point was reached when this consumption would begin.

To all these causes of failure must be added the weighty nature of our impedimenta, the shortage of provisions, the forced marches, the total lack of care or supervision, and all the inseparable consequences of traversing a route already ransacked and destitute of resources, where the men, lacking everything to supply their own needs, were little inclined to pay any heed to their horses, and watched them perish without regret, for their death meant the breakdown of the service on which they were employed, and thus the end to their personal privations. There you have the secret and cause of our earlier disasters and of our final reverse.

Disorder reigned everywhere; in the town as in the country around, everyone was in want. The Guard was in no better plight than the other corps, and thence arose indiscipline and all its attendant evils. The Emperor was angry, and took the corps commanders and administrators to task with something more than severity; but this did no good, in face of the continued failure to bring up rations.

The Emperor hoped to remedy the disorganization of the corps by establishing more direct contact with them. In accordance with plans he had discussed with me since Dresden and Thorn, he created two staff posts to be held by generals, one for the infantry and one for the cavalry, appointing Counts Lobau and Durosnel,<sup>1</sup> who were duly

<sup>1</sup> They "were charged to watch the situation of those two arms, their appearance, their effectiveness, their needs. They were to assure themselves of the actual strength of the regiments at the time of every battle" (Thiers, XIV, 167). It was the first time that Napoleon agreed to an organization of this nature. Antoine Jean August Henry Durosnel, had been aide-de-camp to the Emperor since June 30, 1810, after serving as equerry, and he died in Paris, February 5, 1849.

gazetted.<sup>1</sup> The various corps had to report to them, every detached division or brigade had to have an officer attached to them, and had to send reports direct to their headquarters. He also expected to re-establish order at general headquarters by placing it under an officer who would be capable of coping with the leaders of the Guard. My brother,<sup>2</sup> who had been on the sick list for six months and compelled to leave Spain, had the dangerous honour of being appointed to this post.<sup>3</sup> The Emperor had made him Master of the Pages, so that he could have a rest, and like his predecessors in this post he had acted as the Emperor's aide-de-camp; so His Majesty was acquainted with his strength of character and his love of order. This induced him to entrust to my brother the execution of these onerous duties, despite his repugnance towards the post. He was especially commissioned to re-establish discipline, to supervise hospitals, stores and victualling, and above all, to exercise his authority over the Guard. Day and night my brother spent in reorganizing the administration and inspecting the hospital work. Often he had to stand sword in hand at the depots and distribution centres. He hid nothing from the Emperor. The Guard, whom no one dared to criticize,

<sup>1</sup> Decree of August 12, 1812.

<sup>2</sup> Auguste Jean Gabriel de Caulaincourt, younger brother of the Duke of Vicenza, was born September 15, 1777. He entered the army January 6, 1792, as a volunteer in the 8th Regiment of Cavalry, was promoted Major of the 9th Dragoons on August 24, 1801, and was appointed aide-de-camp to Prince Louis Bonaparte, June 9, 1804. On June 5, 1806, he was authorized to enter the Dutch service and on June 21st of the same year became Master of the Horse to King Louis. Re-entering the French service as General of Brigade on February 10, 1808, he was promoted General of Division, September 7, 1809. He was killed soon afterwards at the Battle of the Moskowa, September 7, 1812. General de Caulaincourt had commanded the cavalry of the 8th Corps in Spain after having been employed in the 2nd Corps of that army, and was retired for reasons of health on February 28, 1810. He was then appointed Master of the Pages.

<sup>3</sup> The nomination of General de Caulaincourt as commandant of the Imperial General Headquarters was dated July 7, 1812.

was treated by him with no more respect than the other corps. The Emperor made some examples; discipline was once more established, and eventually a regular distribution of rations was carried out. During this period the Emperor was occupied, with his accustomed activity, in reorganizing everything. He lived in the Governor's palace,<sup>1</sup> and caused the open space in front of it to be enlarged.<sup>2</sup> The men of the Guard were employed in these works. The heat was excessive, and it was a real pleasure for the army to be able to get a few days' rest at this juncture. The heads of the various services repaired to headquarters, and the Emperor showed his very marked displeasure towards those who had failed him, often even to those who had, so to speak, achieved the impossible.

"It has got to be done," he said to any who sought to excuse themselves by vaunting their efforts.

As for those who spoke of their devotion and zeal:

"I value those sentiments only when they result in success," he answered them.

In this respect the Emperor made himself out to be more difficult than he really was, for, though he did not show it, since it was one of his principles not to praise anyone, he observed, and highly appreciated, men who were zealous and anxious to do their duty.

From a spirit of inexplicable and unpardonable meanness the provisioning of the ambulances had been inadequate. Even the personnel was too scanty. In fact, the army's means of transport, even for the artillery, were wholly insufficient. The Emperor was always anxious to obtain the utmost possible with the least possible expense, with the result that, on moving large depots, almost everything had been loaded into wagons in the hope of being able to commandeer horses in the country, as had been usual in other campaigns, and so provide

<sup>1</sup> This very modest palace had been the residence of the Governor of White Russia.

<sup>2</sup> For this purpose he pulled down several wooden houses that were an obstruction, to enable him to hold reviews. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 125.) This demolition was begun on August 1st and completed on the 6th.

trace-horses and replace casualties as they befell. But Russia supplied no means for doing this. Horses, cattle, all had fled together with the inhabitants; we found ourselves as if in the heart of a desert. Every branch of the service had abandoned the greater part of its equipment by the roadside.

Never had carelessness been carried to greater extremes by the underlings of the administration: never had the courage of unfortunate men been more abused. The army surgeons and the administrative chiefs, as praiseworthy for their zeal as for their talents, were in despair at the state in which they found the hospitals. In vain did they endeavour to make up for whatever was lacking by their care and attention. We had got only as far as Witepsk, we had not fought a battle, and there was not even any surgical lint!

The Emperor was extremely preoccupied, and often in such surly humour that he was careless in the expressions he used towards those persons who displeased him, though such behaviour was by no means usual with him. He was greatly struck by the departure of the townsfolk and the flight of the country people. This method of retreat opened his eyes, maybe, to the possible consequences of this war, and to the distance it might take him from France; but the thousand-and-one things that ought to have opened his eyes to his position vanished before the slightest incident which might revive his hopes. A captured Russian officer brought to headquarters raised his spirits. He assured the Emperor that battle was certain to be given before Witepsk, that it had only been put off because a letter had been received on the 27th from Prince Bagration, containing news that he would not be able to join the army until they reached Smolensk. The Emperor flattered himself that as soon as the Russian army had joined up with Bagration it would make an attack.

Full of hope, he immediately recovered his good temper. The King of Naples, who, like the Emperor, had constantly been nibbling at the Russians, while doing ten or twelve leagues a day, and whose hopes for a success on the morrow had confused the calculations of daily losses by forced marches, realized his weakness as soon as he was in position. He saw

with apprehension the decreasing strength of his regiments, most of which were reduced to less than half their numbers. At the urgent request of General Belliard,<sup>1</sup> he sent him to the Emperor. Forage and stores of all sorts were lacking, for his forces were always in close order and on the alert. Arrangements had not been made for rationing the men during the first few days, and the Cossacks were already hindering them from bringing up stores. The horses were not shod, the harness was in a deplorable state, the forges, like all the rest of the material, had been left in the rear; the greater number of them, indeed, had been abandoned and lost. There were no nails, no smiths, nor any iron suitable for making the former. Nothing had been thought of beforehand, and the most indispensable things were lacking. For some days the men were turned to grinding corn, and the ovens built by the Emperor's orders were put into service. He strove to infuse everyone with his own activity, but everything proceeded listlessly.

The Emperor had two plans. One was not to go far from Witepsk, but to accept battle in that neighbourhood; the other plan, and the one which he preferred, was to advance and attack the enemy, for he thought it would be more to his advantage to force him to a fight. In either case he hoped to push the enemy far enough back to make himself master of the country, and then to act as he chose. After that he reckoned on being able to reinforce the Dwina Corps, fight Wittgenstein,<sup>2</sup> take up more extended positions and quarters, give his troops some rest and himself time to reorganize everything, collect the resources of the country, and bring up reinforcements and supplies of which he had urgent need.

In addition to this, while leaving the Dwina Corps to their own resources until the arrival of reinforcements, he could threaten one of the capitals with his army, and thus force the Russians to yield either Petersburg or Moscow, or to run the

<sup>1</sup> Belliard was at that time acting major-general of cavalry.

<sup>2</sup> Wittgenstein covered the Petersburg road with 25,000 men. On July 31st he attacked and beat Oudinot at Zakubowo, whereupon he installed himself between Drouia and Drissa.

risks of a battle which he felt sure of winning, and which would result in proposals of peace in order to save the threatened capital. His conversations with the Prince of Neuchâtel, and two discussions he had with myself, were all to this effect. If once he could gain his first battle he seemed inclined to stay at Witepsk, so that he could reinforce the Dwina Corps and drive back Wittgenstein's. In this event he would organize the country, bring up his reinforcements, and make all the preparations for a second campaign, if these proposals for peace upon which he was counting did not materialize. The Emperor never ceased to tell us that the Russian army, which could and ought to have been in such strength, and which he had been informed was complete, numbered no more than 150,000 men, including Wittgenstein and the small corps; that the Tsar Alexander was being cheated by his generals and quartermasters, that he had no more than skeleton corps on account of the abuses committed by non-combatants. He often repeated this to me, and added that he was sure that we were as much mistaken in the climate as in everything else, that this country was like France, except that winter lasted longer, and that for six or seven months they had the intense cold which occasionally lasted with us a week or a fortnight. These reproaches, often made with bitterness, were renewed on every possible occasion. In vain did I represent to the Emperor that I had exaggerated nothing, that I had told him the whole truth, as the most loyal of his servants. I could not persuade him. Once, however, while we were staying at Witepsk, he did me the honour of talking to me without the least sharpness, notwithstanding that he still laboured under the same illusions. He believed there would be a battle, because he wanted one, and he believed he would win it, because it was essential that he should. He had no doubt at all that the Tsar Alexander would be compelled by his nobles to ask for peace, since that result was the basis upon which all his schemes were laid.

No amount of reasoning, not even the experiences he had met with since the Niemen, nothing could enlighten him as to the fatality looming ahead. The sight of his soldiers, their

enthusiasm at the sight of him, the reviews and parades, and, above all, the frequently coloured reports of the King of Naples and certain other generals, went to his head; notwithstanding various sane inspirations which resulted from his own reflections or those communicated to him at opportune moments by others, his intoxication persisted.

But there were moments during our stay at Witepsk, when Russia might have made peace without having to make sacrifices, if she had allowed the Emperor a free hand with the Polish Duchy and Galicia, as well as northern Germany. Some expressions to this effect escaped him when he was complaining of the inhabitants of Lithuania and Wolhynia who, he said, had forgotten their Polish birth and had turned Russian.

"It is not worth the trouble of fighting a long time," he added, "for a cause about which these people now care so little."

If the Emperor occasionally saw the situation and the consequences of this war in their true light, if for a moment he spoke of it dispassionately, the next instant his conversation took an entirely different turn. He was obsessed once more by his old illusions and returned to his gigantic projects. The most insignificant skirmish, the arrival of reinforcements, the appearance of some ammunition wagons, a report from the King of Naples, a few cries of "Vive l'Empereur!" at a parade, and above all the letters from Wilna,<sup>1</sup> were enough to turn his head once more.

The Prince of Neuchâtel was snapped at all day long, and overwhelmed with disagreeable things in return for his freedom of speech, his inconceivable activity, his unflagging devotion. The Emperor's vexation with him rose to such a pitch that the Prince frequently expressed his intention of going back to Grosbois, as he was no longer of any service. As a matter of fact, a number of things went wrong. The staff foresaw nothing, but on the other hand, as the Emperor wanted to do everything himself and to give every order, no

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Bassano, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was at Wilna.

one, not even the general staff, dared to assume the responsibility of giving the most trifling order. The administration, deprived, as we have seen, of the means of execution and transport, was quite unable to produce the results demanded by the Emperor, or to carry out orders which he gave without troubling himself as to how they should be executed. He would with reason complain of all the army services for doing little or nothing, but the services in their turn had every reason to complain of the Emperor who had brought them into a country where it was impossible to find the supplies on which His Majesty had certainly reckoned since he was accustomed to find them in Germany or Italy. Everybody was discontented, and it needed all the Emperor's strength of character and his reputation for firmness to impose his will.

Severe, and even harsh, as the Emperor was with the Prince of Neuchâtel, the latter at every opportunity discussed the affairs of France with him, spoke of the weakness of our cavalry, the state of the artillery, the consequences that might follow the slightest reverse, and the discontent existing in Germany. His observations were seldom received in the right spirit, but this did not prevent him from returning to the charge. The Emperor often told him that it was Caulaincourt who put these ideas into his head, that he was making a Russian of him. Nor did I often miss my share of his ill humour, especially when the occasion arose of my talking to him in the same strain. Things came to the point of the Emperor taking a dislike even to the persons forming the Prince's general staff. M. Bailly de Monthyon,<sup>1</sup> who was the moving spirit of the staff, Count Dumas,<sup>2</sup> the zealous and

<sup>1</sup> François Gédéon, Count Bailly de Monthyon, born at Isle de Bourbon, January 27, 1776, died at Paris, September 7, 1850. When acting captain he attracted the notice of Berthier at the battle of Marengo, and was attached to his staff. In this position he served in every campaign of the Empire and was promoted General of Brigade, May 22, 1818. He became General of Division, December 4, 1812 and was created a Peer of France, October 3, 1837.

<sup>2</sup> Count Mathieu Dumas (1753-1837) was Intendant-Général of the Grand Army.

active chief of the administration, and M. Joinville,<sup>1</sup> were the constant objects of His Majesty's prejudice; they had become objects of his dislike. We had never seen him in such a state of irritability, and this made the campaign even more painful for us.

The Prince of Neuchâtel was not discouraged any more than myself or the rest of us, and we made a point of seizing every opportunity to enlighten His Majesty as to the real state of affairs, and to allay the spirit of excitement which tended to involve us entirely in adventure. Counts Lobau and Durosnel, and several others of the Emperor's aides-de-camp, also spoke freely to him about the state of the army when they found an opportunity; and they even made opportunities to do so. Never was the truth so dinned into the ear of a sovereign; but, alas, to no effect. But it is only fair to say that, if the Emperor was far from welcoming the truth because it ran counter to his wishes, he did not reject it violently. At bottom he was not even unduly aggrieved against those who had the courage to tell it, perhaps because he attached no value to it. I have sometimes known the Emperor, when nothing had occurred to upset him, to do me the honour of talking to me with the utmost calmness, permitting me to make all kinds of observations, and even agreeing with me that he had already gone far enough, and that it would be advantageous to wait for peace while in his present position rather than to seek it in the heart of Russia. But these moments were fleeting.

Those who had access to the Emperor were worried by the state of irritation engendered in him by the annoyances of the campaign as much as by the intoxication arising from his illusions, which were encouraged by the very small number of persons who still shared them. Everyone redoubled his efforts to overcome the inconveniences of a position daily becoming more difficult. The Prince of Neuchâtel, the Duke

<sup>1</sup> Baron Louis Joinville (born at Paris, January 5, 1773, died March 29, 1849), was Chief Pay Commissioner of the Grand Army.

of Friuli, Counts Daru, Lobau, Durosnel, Turenne,<sup>1</sup> Narbonne,<sup>2</sup> the Duke of Piacenza,<sup>3</sup> were always those who lost no chance of enlightening the Emperor, and to mention them is but to render homage to a love of the truth to which their characters had long since been consecrated. The detractors of this great epoch may say what they like; never was sovereign surrounded by more capable men, men who were honest before all else, and not mere courtiers, however strong the admiration and attachment which they professed for the great man. Our extraordinary circumstances evoked not so much ambition as zeal and devotion. In spite of the varying shades of character and habits of each of them, wherever the Emperor cared to probe he was sure to find, if he wanted it, a sterling and even disagreeable truth rather than mere flattery.<sup>4</sup> Whether because there had been a surfeit of glory, or because common sense had taught us to distrust its glamour, the fact remains that no one was intoxicated with it. We remained moderate, and good Frenchmen above all.

<sup>1</sup> Henri Amédée Mercure de Turenne (1776-1852) after serving as Orderly Officer to the Emperor, was promoted to be Chamberlain and Grand Master of the Wardrobe after the dismissal of M. de Rémusat.

<sup>2</sup> Count Louis de Narbonne was at that time personal aide-de-camp to the Emperor.

<sup>3</sup> Caulaincourt is not here referring to Le Brun, first Duke of Piacenza, who did not die until 1824, and in 1812 was still Governor-General of Holland. He refers to his son, Anne-Charles, who succeeded his father in the title. Born in Paris, December 28, 1775, he died in Paris, January 21, 1859. He was General of Brigade, March 1, 1807, and General of Division, February 23, 1812. Since March 5, 1800, he had been Napoleon's aide-de-camp.

<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to compare this passage with what Ségar says: "These ministers and generals, in whatsoever concerned each of them, did not conceal the truth from the Emperor. If he got cross, Duroc, without yielding, wrapped himself up in a cloak of impassiveness; Lobau became rude; Berthier groaned and went away with tears in his eyes; as for Caulaincourt and Daru, one pale and the other flushed with anger, they vehemently repelled the Emperor's denials, the first with impetuous doggedness and the other with cold and dry firmness." (Ségar, *Histoire et Mémoires*, IV, 93.)

It must be credited to the honour of the Emperor that his principles, his impartiality, the staunchness of his confidence, which kept the spirit of intrigue at arm's length, had all contributed to the birth and growth of these noble sentiments. The master's well-known dislike of any change gave everyone a sense of security which proved greatly to the advantage of truth. His strength of will had united all opinions and checked all private ambitions. France and the Emperor were blended in a glory which had become common to both. He had subjugated all minds and, without their knowing it, had bent the wills of all men to co-operate in the accomplishment of his own. Who has not been carried away by the ascendancy of that superior genius, by the pre-eminently sovereign qualities, by his good nature, which was that of a private man in his own intimate circle? Who has not admired in him the great captain, the legislator, the restorer of social order, the man, in short, to whom the country owed its internal prosperity and the end of civil war? The Revolution checked, religion re-established, our laws, our administration, our industry increased by a hundredfold, the prosperous state of our finances—was not all this a constant proof to us of our debt to the Emperor, and of what we could still hope for from him? If some persons, however, perceived the dangers of a collapse, when such continual success and glory were so likely to delude the good sense of the majority, their foresight only applied to the particular situation in which they found themselves.

The Emperor had changed the national character. The French had become serious; the bearing was grave; the great questions of the day preoccupied all minds; petty interests were subordinated; the general sentiment was, one may say, patriotic; one would have blushed to show any other. The men who surrounded the Emperor prided themselves on not flattering him. Some even paraded the need of telling him the truth at the risk of displeasing him. It was the spirit of the time. This reflection cannot have escaped those with observation. Opposition, as the Emperor noticed, did not cause the zeal or devotion of anyone to relax. He paid little

attention to it, and attributed it in general to narrow views, and to the fact that few people were capable of grasping his great projects in their entirety. It is certain that this opposition, if I may judge from my own case, arose solely from the wish to protect the interests of the Emperor's peculiar glory. What personal sentiment or interest could have held sway amid such a unanimous concert of devotion? Who could then foresee what has since happened? I can assert that no one was moved except by the interests of France, and the need of preserving the prodigies of the Emperor's glory. Only this double interest could be opposed to the gigantic enterprises of that glory, all the dangers of which a secret instinct seemed now to be revealing. There is no doubt that this enthusiasm of the Emperor, the ambition that induced him to run such hazards so far from France, scared everyone as soon as the trend of events began to breed doubts of success. Moreover, everyone blamed him in private, though the peace, always rejected by England, and represented by the Emperor as the motive of all his enterprises, justified him in the eyes of a nation over which power and imagination would ever hold more influence, and even dominion, than reason and experience.

Only ten days had elapsed after our arrival at Witepsk before it became necessary to send ten or twelve leagues for fodder. The inhabitants who had not fled were everywhere in arms; consequently it was impossible to find any means of transport. Horses already in need of rest were further enfeebled by having to go in search of food, and were exposed, together with the men, to the danger of being caught by the Cossacks or massacred by the peasants, as frequently happened.

The corps commanders not actually in the front line came to Witepsk in turn, as well as the chiefs of the administration. The Emperor saw them with the officers of the general staff at the parade, and afterwards talked with them. Every day he went on horseback to make extensive reconnaissances of the neighbourhood, and several times during the day visited the ovens and bakeries. The camps and bivouacs which had been occupied by the Russians attracted his attention several

times as being likely to give some indication of the enemy army's strength. He repeated that the enemy was considerably below the numbers that he had estimated at the opening of the campaign.

On August 7th or 8th, the enemy carried out a strong reconnaissance against General Sébastiani's Corps, which was forced to retire<sup>1</sup> and give up some of its posts. On first hearing news of this the Emperor was delighted. He thought the whole Russian army was on the move and that the hour for the long-desired battle had at last struck. But his hope was short-lived. He learned immediately that it had only been a reconnaissance; yet it might be the prelude to a general movement of the army, and he flattered himself it was so, until the next day. Then, judging the actual projects of his adversary by his previous dispositions, he began to despair of seeing him take the decision of giving battle as soon as he knew for certain that the attack had not been followed up and that the enemy had retired.

Having no further hopes that the enemy would attack him, as he had made himself believe when he knew that Prince Bagration had joined up with the main army,<sup>2</sup> and on the other hand being unable to give his own army the rest it needed so long as the enemy was in force, so close at hand, the Emperor decided on the 10th to follow him; he announced his intention of moving his right across the Dnieper at Rossassna,<sup>3</sup> while the Russians, with the same object in view,

<sup>1</sup> It was on August 8th that Barclay sent a strong advance-guard of cavalry composed of Platow's Cossacks and Pahlen's Cavalry against Inkowo where Sébastiani was in quarters with Montbrun's Light Cavalry and a battalion of the 24th Light Infantry. The French were compelled to retreat after losing from four to five hundred men.

<sup>2</sup> Bagration had actually arrived at Smolensk on August 4th; Barclay had been there since the 2nd.

<sup>3</sup> Murat, Ney, Eugène, Morand, Friant and Gudin began their march on August 11th, in the direction of the Dnieper, which they reached at Liadouï and Rossassna. They crossed the river during the night of the 13th-14th.

would carry out the same movement in order to attack us on the right bank of that river.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor left Witepsk on the 12th at eleven o'clock in the evening. On the morning of the 13th he was at Rossassna on the left bank of the Dnieper; the Guard arrived during the day. A very weak garrison had been left at Witepsk with the sick and wounded. The Emperor planned to fight a big battle and drive back the enemy so that he should be able to rest his army and organize the country for winter quarters, while with the same end in view his corps on the Dwina should act. Still fixed in his original purpose, he desired to organize everything so as to be in a position to march on the capital when the spring campaign opened, if the measures he hoped to take and the difficulties the Russian Government would encounter did not induce the Petersburg cabinet to make peace during the winter, or even before. The Emperor counted on this happening more than ever, for he was already tired of the war and, as he said, would not raise difficulties in the matter of peace conditions.

The Emperor mounted his horse on reaching Rossassna, watched the corps on the march, made a very extended reconnaissance beyond Liadouï, and did not return to his quarters at Rossassna until nightfall. The next morning<sup>2</sup> he was in the saddle at daybreak. He went along the banks of the Dnieper, gathered information and received the reports of several reconnaissances carried out by Polish troops who had been ordered to scour both banks of the river. The Guard was ordered to move and the Emperor led it in person to Krasnoë. On the way he learned that the cavalry had come to blows with a Russian division which, it was supposed, had been sent to cover Krasnoë.<sup>3</sup> He started off at a gallop, but heard shortly afterwards that the skirmish was over, and

<sup>1</sup> The Russians had actually decided to take the defensive on the 7th in three columns. They gave up this plan on the 8th.

<sup>2</sup> August 14th.

<sup>3</sup> Grouchy's Horse had encountered the Nieverovsky Division, thrown by Bagration along the left bank of the Dnieper, and had driven it back on Krasnoë and Korythia.

met the guns taken by our troops, which were being brought back by the brave fellows who had captured them. Every man received a handsome gratuity and the pieces were handed over to the Guard, with orders to take care of these first trophies of the campaign. According to the reports received by the Emperor, the Russian division, supported by some Cossack squadrons, was far from expecting to encounter the shock of our cavalry. Nevertheless it showed a good face, formed square, and valiantly defended the guns and its ground. It was impossible to break the squares, but the corners were turned at every charge, some men were sabred in the gaps between them, and in their retreat they lost seven guns. The enemy kept such a firm bearing that they held together till the end of the day and gained some defiles that saved them from complete destruction.

When night fell the Emperor returned to the Guard's bivouac near Liadouï.<sup>1</sup> The information obtained from wounded prisoners made an end to all the Emperor's uncertainties and confirmed his knowledge of the movement of Barclay de Tolly on the right bank which he had been led to suspect since midday by the report of a reconnaissance. All corps were ordered to press their march on Smolensk. The Emperor set out with the Guard before daybreak, hoping to reach the place in advance of the Russian Army, in front of which we had unknowingly defiled in going to Rossassna by way of Babinowitschi.

Very early in the morning of the 15th, he went at a gallop to the advance-guard, at the gates of Smolensk. Having invested the town closely, he quickly reconnoitred the environs. The enemy appeared in force, our troops came up, and the day was passed in bombardments and minor attacks to straighten his positions and get as near the town as possible. On the morrow<sup>2</sup> the investment was made yet closer; a cemetery and several houses which commanded the plateau

<sup>1</sup> This bivouac was established at Boyarinkowa, between Liadouï and Krasnoë.

<sup>2</sup> August 16th.

on which the town is built were destroyed. An adjutant sent out by General Dalton<sup>1</sup> to observe from a windmill noticed, during the morning, that the Russians were sending out troops. The General went to observe for himself, and ascertained that two or three regiments were formed up beneath the walls, with others following them. The Emperor gave orders that the cordon round the town should be drawn tighter and these troops pushed back, and if possible captured. The attack was hotly fought. General Dalton and all the brigade colonels were wounded in their bold repulse of the enemy right back to the walls of the town. He debouched from the right of the salt warehouses between the town and the out-lying houses, but his wound delayed the action, which had no further result. The Russians stood their ground bravely to the death, but did not hold the position.

That evening the Emperor brought some guns into position to bombard the bridge, which could be seen plainly enough to observe the troops defiling across it, some entering the town, others marching out of it.

A little later it was seen that these were Barclay's last corps arriving, and that part of the garrison had been relieved by them. What was the reason of this change? Did it foreshadow yet another retreat? The Emperor was puzzled, and at once became annoyed at the idea of having to march on and move yet further from his base, so as to come up with this army which he could have forced into giving battle had he attacked forty-eight hours earlier. He asked me what I thought of these movements of troops. He tried to make me say that the Russians would hold and fight a battle, which was what he wanted. He was like a man in need of consolation. Thinking, on the contrary, that the Russians no longer had the initiative for attacking, and, being thus unable to

<sup>1</sup> Alexandre, Count Dalton (born at Brive, April 10, 1775, died at Paris, March 20, 1859), was promoted General of Brigade, March 21, 1809, and in 1812 commanded the 1st Brigade of the 1st Division (Morand). He was seriously wounded in the left foot by a Biscayan while marching at the head of the 13th Light Infantry, August 16, 1812. In 1813 he defended the citadel of Erfurt and was gazetted General of Division, April 13, 1815.

choose their positions, would prefer to retire, I said so very plainly.

"If that is so," answered the Emperor, in the tones of a man who has suddenly reached a decision, "by abandoning Smolensk, which is one of their holy towns, the Russian Generals are dishonouring their arms in the eyes of their own people. That will put me in a strong position. We will drive them a little further back, to ensure that we are left undisturbed. I will fortify my positions. We will rest the troops, and from this base we shall organize the country and see how Alexander likes that. I shall give my attention to the corps on the Dwina, which is doing nothing; my army will be more formidable and my position more menacing to the Russians than if I had won two battles. I will establish my headquarters at Witepsk. I will raise Poland in arms, and later on I will choose, if necessary, between Moscow and Petersburg."

Delighted to find the Emperor imbued with such good and sound ideas, I applauded his resolution; he seemed to me sublime, great, far-seeing, as in the day of his most splendid victory. I told him that this procedure would really lead to peace, as it would strengthen him in proportion to his advance, and would deter him from running too great risks. The Russian plan proved that they wished to draw him into the interior of the country, lead him further from his base, and shut him up amid the ice. It was imperative not to play their game, I added. His Majesty seemed to approve my reflections highly and to have finally made up his mind. I hastened to report my conversation to the Prince of Neuchâtel, so that he should do his utmost to hold the Emperor to his wise resolutions; but the Prince seemed to be doubtful whether they would survive the taking of Smolensk. Alas, he was only too right: I had been so overjoyed at what I heard that I too had let myself be deluded!

On the 17th the Russians were compelled to evacuate all their positions outside the town. The Emperor brought up the siege batteries and placed thirty pieces to break down the bridge, which was plainly visible now that we were close to the town. This battery so harassed the enemy that his columns

defiled across it at the double. They were clearly in full retreat. Wishing to launch an assault, the Emperor, some engineer officers, and some of the staff decided to reconnoitre the *enceinte*, but they had no scaling ladder. Finally, the reports which he received made the Emperor decide to abandon that project. Towards evening the enemy's retreating movements were unmistakable. The town had been on fire since the morning, and the flames, fed by the enemy themselves, showed no sign of abating. During the night the conflagration grew worse. It was a frightful sight, and the cruel prelude to what we were to behold at Moscow. Unable to sleep, I walked about (it was two o'clock in the morning) reflecting mournfully on the consequences that must ensue from this war if the Emperor did not pursue the good intentions he had manifested on the previous day. These scenes of horror and devastation inspired in me, I believe, a presentiment of those of which I was later to be the unhappy witness. My conversation with the Emperor continually came to my mind, and consoled me a little, but the Prince of Neuchâtel's observations were no less insistent, and my experience led me only too surely to share his opinion and his apprehensions. The night was cold. I drew near to a fire burning before the Emperor's tent, on the side facing the town,<sup>1</sup> and was growing drowsy as I sat before it when His Majesty came up with the Prince of Neuchâtel and the Duke of Istria. They gazed at the flaming town; it lit up the whole horizon, which at the same time sparkled with our own bivouac fires.

“An eruption of Vesuvius!” cried the Emperor,<sup>2</sup> clapping me on the shoulder and awakening me from my torpor. “Is not that a fine sight, my Master of Horse!”

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor's tent was pitched near the manor of Ivanovkai.

<sup>2</sup> Napoleon made use of this expression in his 13th bulletin, dated from Smolensk, August 21st: “The city, however, was in flames. Throughout a fine August night Smolensk offered to the French a similar spectacle to that afforded to the inhabitants of Naples by an eruption of Vesuvius.” In a letter to Félix Faure, dated from Smolensk, August 19, 1812, Stendhal speaks of “such a fine sight,” of “so rare a spectacle” as the fire afforded. (*Correspondance de Stendhal*, Paris, 1908, I, 381.)

"Horrible, Sire!"

"Bah!" rejoined the Emperor. "Remember, gentlemen, what one of the Roman emperors said, 'the corpse of a dead enemy always smells good!'"

We were all shocked by this remark. For my own part, I at once recalled what the Prince of Neuchâtel had said; and this and the Emperor's observation long haunted my inmost thoughts. I looked at the Prince; and we glanced meaningfully at one another, as men who understand each other without speaking; and we knew only too well that we could not reckon on the wise inspirations which had so recently rejoiced my heart.

At four o'clock in the morning<sup>1</sup> some marauders who had been on the watch made their way into the town through some old breaches that the enemy had not so much as repaired; and at five o'clock the Emperor learned that the place was evacuated.<sup>2</sup> He gave orders that the troops should not enter except in formation, but the men had already got in by several loopholes which they had opened and scaled. The Emperor mounted his horse, reconnoitred the enceinte on the east, and entered the town by an old gap in the wall. He went all round the city at once, and eventually stationed himself at the bridge, where he spent the day hastening on the work of repairing it.

The public buildings in the great square and the finest houses in the town had been but little damaged. The arsenal was intact, though very little of anything was left in it. Every quarter of the town had suffered; the inhabitants had fled with the army, the only people left being some old folk of the lowest classes, a priest and an artisan. They told us all they knew about what had happened in the town, but could give no information concerning the army, not even what its losses had been. The Emperor seemed very satisfied, even triumphant.

"Before a month is out," he said, "we shall be in Moscow; in six weeks we shall have peace."

<sup>1</sup> August 18th.

<sup>2</sup> The Russian movement had started at one o'clock in the morning, August 18th.

These words of prophecy by no means carried conviction to everyone, at least so far as peace was concerned.

This Moscow project, although it was the result promised by the Emperor with such confidence, pleased no one. Our distance from France, and above all, the manifold hardships ensuing from these new tactics of the Russians, who destroyed even the houses they were forced to abandon, robbed the glory of all its glamour. Marshal Ney had made all preparations for crossing the Dnieper a league from the town, in order to follow up the Russians,<sup>1</sup> whose rear-guard only was in sight; pursuing the enemy, he found them in position at Valutina. General de Borrelli,<sup>2</sup> who was attached to the staff of the King of Naples, came to inform the Emperor of this. He refused to believe that they would offer any resistance, or that anyhow there was more than a rear-guard in position; but successive reports convinced him that it was a more considerable corps. He proceeded thither himself and immediately sent several officers to the Duke of Abrantès, and even the Prince of Neuchâtel, with orders to advance and engage the Russians, without letting a single man escape. In the meantime Marshal Ney had attacked and overthrown the enemy with his usual boldness; but a grenadier division, sent to reinforce the rear-guard, held the position despite a fresh attack by Gudin's division. This General, one of the most distinguished in the army, was mortally wounded at the start of the action,<sup>3</sup> and lived but a short while. He died esteemed by the whole army and mourned by all who knew him. This occurrence did not hinder the troops from taking the first position, but the enemy were successively reinforced, and the Duke of Abrantès,

<sup>1</sup> Ney passed the Dnieper in the morning of the 19th.

<sup>2</sup> Charles Luce Paulin Clément de Borrelli (born at Villefort, Lozère, December 20, 1771, died at Paris, September 22, 1849) was only promoted General of Brigade on September 11, 1812. He became General of Division on July 6, 1815. In August 1812 he was second on the staff of Murat.

<sup>3</sup> Wounded by a bullet in both his legs, with one thigh torn off, and a calf lacerated, he was taken to Smolensk, where he died, August 22, 1811.

who was to have outflanked him and turned his left, did not come up in time,<sup>1</sup> and so the Russians held the crest of their position until nightfall. When the Emperor reached a point which gave him a view over the whole countryside, he again sent orders to the Duke of Abrantès to act with vigour.

“Barclay is mad,” he said. “That rear-guard is ours, even if Junot only marches here at ease.”

The Emperor learned of the end of the affair before he reached Valutina, and returned to Smolensk<sup>2</sup> highly incensed with the Duke of Abrantès, who had not acted with the vigour he had shown on previous occasions. The Prince of Neuchâtel and the Dukes of Istria and Elchingen reproached him for not having marched up fast enough; for his part, the Duke of Abrantès, whose corps was composed of foreign troops, contended that, since he was obliged to march in close order so as to run no risks, his movement had been delayed by obstacles which forced him to bear to the right. From what the Prince of Neuchâtel and the King of Naples said, no such obstacles existed. I remember the different reports that were made to the Emperor. At the sound of gunfire the King of Naples went in person to the Duke of Abrantès, whose corps was in front of his own. Seeing how useful, and indeed how glorious a diversion he could make, the King pressed him to hasten his movements.

“You are annoyed at not being a Marshal,” he said. “Here is a fine chance! Take it! You are sure of winning your baton.”

While waiting for his cavalry to come up, the King placed himself at the head of the Würtemburgers who formed the Duke's advance guard, with the object of beginning and pressing on the advance, at the same time making the Duke

<sup>1</sup> Junot, ill and discouraged, after crossing the Dnieper at Prouditchevo, had been seized with a fit of indecision from which Gourgaud, sent to him by the Emperor, was unable to rouse him. Cf. Gourgaud, *Napoléon et la Grande Armée en Russie*, Paris, 1825, 172.

<sup>2</sup> He returned to his headquarters about five o'clock in the even

promise to support him. When the King put this cavalry to the charge, they would have distinguished themselves and driven back the Russians, but the Duke of Abranté's corps did not follow up, and the King was obliged to slacken his movement for fear of being imperilled ; he had to wait for his own troops, who were still at some distance, although coming up at the trot. The Emperor's anger can readily be imagined when he received several reports of what had taken place.

"Junot has let the Russians escape," he said bitterly. "He is losing the campaign for me."

In his first moment of anger he coupled with this reproach the severest reflections and threats ; but as usual the memory of past services well rendered overbore the wrongs of the moment, and his discontent had no sequel.

The Emperor busied himself with making Smolensk what he called his pivot, and a safe stronghold for his communications in the event of being reluctantly forced to push on further. He worked night and day with Count Daru<sup>1</sup> in attending to all the administrative details, notable for provisions and the requirements of the hospitals.

He had ordered several reconnaissances of the fortress and the environs. General de Chasseloup<sup>2</sup> having come to him with an account of what had been done, the Emperor remarked jokingly, "Wouldn't you like to make another Alexandria of

<sup>1</sup> Count Bruno Daru had been Minister Secretary of State since April 17, 1811. General Mathieu Dumas, Intendant Général of the Grand Army, writes in his *Précis des événements militaires, ou essais historiques sur les campagnes de 1799 à 1814* that during the war in Russia "M. Daru did not bear the title of Intendant Général, but he actually fulfilled the functions of that post. Working every day with the Emperor, he enlightened me by his advice, directed me, and notably during the retreat from Moscow when a grave illness kept me a long time from performing the duties entrusted to me, M. Daru took up my work without a qualm."

<sup>2</sup> François de Chasseloup-Laubat, born at Saint-Sornin (Charente Inférieure) on August 18, 1754, died at Paris, October 6, 1833. He had been General of Division since September 17, 1799. He was appointed Commandant-in-Chief of the Engineers in the Grand Army, June 27, 1812.

the place and eat up another fifty millions of money? Russia is not worth that."

General de Chasscloup was proposing nothing of the sort; he only wanted to erect some outworks in order to form a point of defence on the Dnieper. The next day<sup>1</sup> the Emperor stopped all the work in hand, appearing to have no wish to go beyond Smolensk.

This retreat of the Russians, without any possibility of saying where they would halt, the increasing certainty that they had themselves set fire to Smolensk, and this war of mutual destruction with no result beyond the gaining of ground—all these circumstances gave food for serious thought to the Emperor, and confirmed his desire to go no further and to do his best to bring about negotiations. The following details can leave no doubt of his intentions, which he openly explained to the Princes of Neuchâtel and Eckmühl. After his arrival at Smolensk the Emperor inquired whether there was any slightly wounded officer or any man of some standing in the place. The only person they could find was a Russian officer, who had come, I believe, with a flag of truce and for some reason or another had been detained.<sup>2</sup> The Emperor interviewed him, and after a few insignificant questions, asked him if there was going to be a battle, adding that it would be dishonourable to the Russian arms to yield their country without giving battle, without even measuring their strength with us once at least. Thereafter it would be easy to make peace, as between two champions reconciled after a duel. The war, he said, was only a matter of politics. He wished for nothing better than that the Tsar Alexander should feel as little resentment as he did. The Emperor added later that he was going to send this officer back to his own army, on condition that he would repeat to the Tsar what he was going

<sup>1</sup> August 20th.

<sup>2</sup> This refers to Count Orloff, officer in the Guards, who had come with a flag of truce to ask news of General Paul Alexeiev Tuchkoff, who had been made prisoner at Valutina. He was detained so that he should not be able to observe the movements of the army.

to tell him: namely, that he, the Emperor Napoleon, wished for peace, and that he had wanted nothing better than to have reached an understanding before war had broken out. The officer promised to convey these messages, but at the same time observed that he did not think peace possible so long as the French were on Russian soil.<sup>1</sup>

The King of Naples had been ordered to pursue the Russians. The Emperor had placed the Prince of Eckmühl under his command, particularly urging him to keep on pressing the enemy in such a manner that they should have no time to rally their forces and engage in battle; for his object was to push them as far away as possible, and so enable his own army to enjoy a rest. At all events, the Emperor had made me arrange for relays so that he should be able to go quickly to the advance-guard in the event of important developments. In accordance with instructions given to the King of Naples, the Prince of Eckmühl was under his orders, but the instructions given to the latter were only that he should support the King if necessary, and not run any risks or engage in any general affair. He had thus an independent command<sup>2</sup> unless his help was needed. The Emperor had given him the same instructions verbally, and explained the purpose he had in view. In addition, he had written in the same sense on the morrow and on the following day, asking the Marshal for information as to what was happening, adding that he did not wish to rely on the King's reports, as the latter was so easily carried away just when he, the Emperor, did not wish to become involved.<sup>3</sup>

The Russian Army marched in good order, without undue haste, like people intent on abandoning nothing and prepared in case of necessity to hold their ground. The King of Naples

<sup>1</sup> See Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, I, 433) for a letter from Berthier to Barclay, dictated by Napoleon and dated from Rouibki, August 28th; also Madame de Staél (*Dix années d'exil*, in the *Renaissance du Libre* edition, 184).

<sup>2</sup> For an account of the disputes between Murat and Davout see *Correspondance de Davout*, III, 184.

<sup>3</sup> Caulaincourt is probably alluding to the Emperor's letters to Davout, dated from Smolensk, August 22nd and 23rd. (*Correspondance*, 19115 and 19123.)

believed that their good marching order showed their intention of giving battle. He even had the idea—it is not known why—that Barclay had taken up his position behind the Ouja,<sup>1</sup> and that he was establishing entrenchments in front of Dorogobouje in preparation for this battle.<sup>2</sup> The King thought this might be the battle for which the Emperor had expressed so many hopes, and if we gained it the army could be ensured of a long rest in billets without being forced to leave its base too far behind. Our numerical superiority and our habit of success justified us in believing that we should gain a victory. The King of Naples poured forth his dreams and hopes to the Emperor. I call them dreams, for Miloradovich's reinforcements had not come up,<sup>3</sup> and the Russians were in no position to give battle.

But these hopes were too attractive, and accorded too well with the Emperor's own views, not to sweep him off his feet. He left Smolensk<sup>4</sup> in all haste. The Guard moved ahead in echelon to support the King of Naples if necessary, and was ordered to press forward; and once again the Emperor was forced into an adventure in some degree against his will. Reaching Dorogobouje on the 25th he stayed there throughout the 26th.<sup>5</sup>

Once more the gauntlet was thrown down, and the Emperor was not the man to turn back. The sight of his troops and all the warlike bustle exalted him. The wise reflections he had made in Smolensk yielded to the allurements of glory as soon as he found himself amidst these elements. It was said

<sup>1</sup> An affluent of the Dnieper, which flows into that river at Ouswiat.

<sup>2</sup> The Emperor to Eugène, dated Smolensk, August 24th, nine o'clock in the morning: "The King of Naples informs me that the armies are facing one another, and that the enemy has all his forces in battle formation at Dorogobouje." (*Correspondance*, 19124.)

<sup>3</sup> The 15,000 reinforcements brought up by Miloradovich did not join the army until August 27th.

<sup>4</sup> The 25th, at one in the morning. (*Castellane, Journal*, I, 141.)

<sup>5</sup> Napoleon installed himself at Dorogobouje on the 25th at five in the evening, and started again on the 26th at half-past eleven in the evening.

that we should overtake the enemy forces on the morrow; they were pressed; they could not always escape at the rate they were being driven. It was useless to expect real rest until a battle had been fought; otherwise we should be kept constantly anxious. In short, as many good reasons were found for pressing forward as had been discovered, forty-eight hours earlier, for staying at Smolensk, and once again we set off in pursuit of the glory, or rather the fatality, which persisted in checking the Emperor's good intentions and wiser projects. These particulars, told to me by the Prince of Neu-châtel, have since been confirmed by the Prince of Eckmühl.

Nevertheless he<sup>1</sup> was at this moment tired and disgusted with this war, of which he could see no sign of the end. He complained about the Poles. From the very beginning of the campaign he had shown his discontent with Prince Poniatowski, because he had asked for assistance and funds, his troops not having been paid for a long time and being in need of many things.<sup>2</sup> The Emperor also made daily complaints that nothing was being done at Warsaw, that Lithuania was lukewarm, that the levies were not produced and that he was being asked for money, as if the Poles ought not to make some sacrifice for the restoration of their country. In this momentary disgust with Polish affairs he supplemented the direct complaints he had made through his minister and the ambassador by making the Prince of Neuchâtel write to Bignon,<sup>3</sup> who corresponded with him: "The result of all this is that the government does very little, organization does not advance, the administration is not resourceful; in short, the country is of little use to us."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor.

<sup>2</sup> See letter from the Emperor to Berthier, dated Wilna, July 9, 1812. (*Correspondance*, 18932.)

<sup>3</sup> Baron Louis Pierre Edouard Bignon (1771-1841) was at that time the Emperor's commissioner to the Commission for the Government of Lithuania.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Napoleon to Maret, Smolensk, August 23, 1812. "It seems to me that Bignon is doing badly; he criticizes the governor instead of supporting him. The country is doing nothing . . . the government is asleep." (*Correspondance*, 19119.)

The news of a success obtained by Prince Schwarzenberg over the Russians revived the Emperor's hopes.<sup>1</sup>

"This gives a colour to the alliance," he said. "That gunshot will boom in Petersburg, in my brother Alexander's throne-room. It is a good example for the Prussians; maybe their honour will be piqued."

He asked me if Prince Schwarzenberg was well known at Petersburg, and if his connections were with the most exalted personages of the Court. He granted him a second sum of 500,000 francs on account of secret expenses, and instructed the Prince of Neuchâtel to send him the bond.<sup>2</sup>

On the 24th the Emperor made a demand at Vienna that rewards of honour should be given to this corps, and that all its advancement should be in its own unit.<sup>3</sup>

The Emperor took up his residence on the Ouja at Dorogobouje in a large house, a kind of manor or bailiwick on a hill. A little corn was found there, and this was all the more useful as the enemy had left nothing at Smolensk, and the first supplies that had been secured would barely have sufficed for the needs of the hospitals and the daily consumption. Several corps received long unwonted bread at Dorogobouje. Confirmation was received of details of the Tsar's arrival at Moscow on July 24th, of which we had known little and had only heard after our arrival in Smolensk. We heard that he had convoked the nobility and gentry, that he had not disguised from them the position of the State, and had asked all the governments for aid. Moscow had offered 80,000

<sup>1</sup> At the head of the Austrian corps Schwarzenberg had effected his junction with Reynier (7th Corps) and had placed himself in front of General Tormasov's army. On August 12th he attacked at Goroderzna, between Kobryn and Pruzany. The following night Tormasov retired on Kobryn. Schwarzenberg pursued him until August 29th. The two forces came to a halt on the two banks of the Styr, towards Luck, and remained in that position until the arrival of Tchitchagoff on September 18th.

<sup>2</sup> Napoleon to Berthier, Smolensk, August 24, 1812. (*Correspondance, 19128.*)

<sup>3</sup> Napoleon to Francis, Smolensk, August 24, 1812. (*Correspondance, 19140.*)

men, and the others in proportion; Little Russia had given him 80,000 Cossacks and the rank and file of battalions, squadrons, and companies all fully equipped. To give this armament a national and religious character, Archbishop Platow had offered the Tsar the miracle-working picture of St. Serge, which His Majesty had given to the Moscow militia. In short, a holy war was being preached against the French. It was also learned that the Tsar had sent the Grand Duke Constantine<sup>1</sup> from Polotsk to Petersburg to raise the spirits of the public and press for levies, and to ensure that nothing should thwart General Barclay, to whom the entire responsibility had thus been left for what might take place.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperor Napoleon, who had left the Duke of Belluno<sup>3</sup> on the Niemen, although he had left Witepsk with the idea that he would stay in Smolensk, having decided to advance, sent an order from Dorogobouje to the Duke that he should proceed to Smolensk. Shortly afterwards there followed detailed instructions for the support, if necessary, of the corps which had been on our flanks up till then, notably that of Marshal Saint-Cyr on the Dwina.<sup>4</sup>

From Dorogobouje the army marched almost in line, the King's cavalry, the Guard, the 1st Corps and Marshal Ney's Corps on the road, the Poles on the right, the Viceroy on the left.

We found ourselves in the highest plateau in Russia, the watershed from which the Volga flows into the Caspian Sea, the Dnieper into the Black Sea, and the Dwina into the Baltic. Since crossing the Dnieper the troops and the artillery had become exhausted by the sand; but the supposed battle dispositions of Barclay demanded that the formation of troops

<sup>1</sup> Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch, younger brother of the Tsar, born March 8, 1779, died June 27, 1831. He subsequently renounced his right to the throne in favour of his brother Nicholas.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. K. Waliszewski, *Le Règne d'Alexandre Ier*, II, 71.

<sup>3</sup> Victor commanded the 9th Corps.

<sup>4</sup> Napoleon to Berthier, August 23rd and 26th. (*Correspondance 19120 and 19146.*)

should be as close as possible. Few prisoners had been made in the Valutina skirmish; in the great pursuit of the enemy we made none at all—not so much as a cart was seized. The Russians retired in good order, not leaving behind even a single wounded man. The inhabitants followed the army, leaving the villages completely deserted. The unfortunate town of Dorogobouje, which the Russians had left to us intact, was set on fire and burned by the camp-fires which our troops had lit too near the houses. For days many villages shared the same fate. The burning of Smolensk, completed by the Russians, had exasperated our soldiers, and in any case there was little order.

On the 27th headquarters were moved to the small manor-house of Slawkowo,<sup>1</sup> on the afternoon of the 28th to Rouibkoio or Ribki. It was from here that the Emperor caused the Prince of Neuchâtel to write to General Barclay, taking as pretext the return of Orloff, who had come with a flag of truce to inquire for news of General Tuchkoff,<sup>2</sup> captured in a skirmish in the wood of Valutina.<sup>3</sup>

The Emperor was extremely anxious to secure the negotiation which he desired above all else, and took this chance of sending a few gracious words to the Tsar Alexander. He was also anxious to establish the fact that he felt no personal animosity, and that as this war was purely political there was no obstacle to an understanding at any time.

<sup>1</sup> Castellane (*Journal*, I, 141) gives the name of Postea to the manor where imperial headquarters were established.

<sup>2</sup> Tuchkoff, wounded in the head, had been taken to imperial headquarters by M. de Rohan-Chabot at midnight on the 19th. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 138.)

<sup>3</sup> The Prince of Neuchâtel informed the Commander-in-Chief, Barclay de Tolly, that M. Orloff, officer in the Guards, who had been sent for news of General Tuchkoff (who had started for Metz), having been directed in error to Smolensk, had been directed on his return by our advance posts on the Wiasma road. He added that the Emperor Napoleon instructed him to inform the Emperor Alexander that no vicissitude of war nor any circumstances could modify the esteem and friendship he bore him, and he spoke of the exchange of prisoners. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

The silence observed by the Petersburg cabinet, as well as by the Commander-in-Chief, following on M. de Balachoff's mission, was attributed by the Emperor to his supposed animosity, which would make him reject any kind of overture or arrangement that was not based on the restoration of Poland and the dismemberment of that part of Russia. The Emperor often spoke in this sense to the Prince of Neuchâtel. On two occasions he said to me :

"Alexander sees clearly that his generals are simply making fools of themselves and that his country is being lost; but he has put himself into the hands of the English, and the London cabinet is stirring up the nobles and preventing them from coming to terms. He is being told that I want to take all his Polish provinces from him, and that he will never have peace except at that price. He cannot pay it, for the Russians, who all own land in Poland, would strangle him within a year if he yielded, just as they did his father. He is wrong in not trusting me, for I wish him no harm; I would even make sacrifices to save him from his embarrassments. If he were not possessed by this fear he would have written to me, and sent someone to discuss matters with me, for it is not in his interest to prolong this war."

"Nor in mine," he added, during a conversation at Smolensk; "for the Poles are without means of keeping up the struggle; the levies are not forthcoming; they do nothing for their own cause; every day they ask for money, and in Lithuania, thanks to the Russian occupation, they have got nothing but paper. The Poles would like Galicia, but it does not matter to them in the least that it would mean my becoming embroiled with Austria. I will not ruin France for their sake. If Alexander would send me some reliable person we should soon come to an understanding; he will not again get such good terms or find a better opportunity. I am not more wedded to Poland than to anything else. There are many ways of settling things. Let him declare himself against England and all will be straightforward. The Turks have made peace; Andrëossy has not been able to stop the

ratification.<sup>1</sup> Bernadotte has forgotten that he is a born Frenchman; to the shame of Sweden he is in league with the Russians.<sup>2</sup> This impolitic conduct will be cast in his teeth; and some day it will ruin him. It is unheard of that the two Powers who have all the claims against the Russians should become their allies when the occasion is so propitious for reconquering all that they have lost. Such a chance will never occur again. The army of Finland will reinforce Wittgenstein.<sup>3</sup> The army of Moldavia will also be free for use, for the Turks will not so soon change from a state of peace to one of offensive war as to leave no time to observe what they are doing. English gold and the wiles of Alexander have done as much as Maret's lack of foresight. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs ought to have assured me of the Swedes and the Turks, but no one has any idea of politics nowadays. I am not properly served at all; I have to do everything myself. France will never cease to reproach Maret with this. There is no lack of money, and at Constantinople it is easy to do anything with gold! That is how the Russians got their treaty signed; the same means should have been used to prevent the Turks from ratifying it. Sweden is so poor, and the interests of the country so obvious, that a million distributed to the proper parties, and several millions more to enable them to mobilize the army, would have done all that was wanted. This ineptitude has done me great harm; it has upset everything. Who could have expected that these two States would have acted in a way so contrary to their interests? Their policy was so clear, their course so obvious!"

<sup>1</sup> The Treaty of Bucharest had been signed on May 28, 1812, subject to ratification by the sovereigns. These ratifications had been exchanged July 20, 1812.

<sup>2</sup> Russia and Sweden had already been bound secretly by the treaty of April 1812, and their alliance was consolidated by the treaties of the 12th and 18th July. The first was a treaty of peace between England and Sweden; the second a treaty of alliance between Russia and England.

<sup>3</sup> The Emperor guessed aright, for the interview of Abo, between the Tsar and the Crown Prince of Sweden, had taken place on August 27th. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

I reminded His Majesty that M. de Bassano had not been able to despatch M. Andréossy without orders; that, so far as Sweden was concerned, it was his own insistence on the Continental System, the capture of Swedish ships, and, above all, the disarming of the regiments that had been sent to France as prisoners, which had wounded the self-esteem of that excessively proud nation. These reflections made the Emperor impatient, and he explained them away in his own manner. "You know nothing of affairs; you do not understand"—such were the words that put an end to this conversation.

News of the enemy decided the Emperor to proceed that evening to Nedikias.<sup>1</sup> On the 29th, we were at Wiasma, where M. de Lauriston rejoined His Majesty,<sup>2</sup> who had a long talk with him. The next day the Emperor remarked to me as we were on the march:

"Well, Caulaincourt, your friend Alexander did not want to make war, eh?"

"Your Majesty has had proof of that," I answered. "The peace he made with Turkey,<sup>3</sup> and many other events, have surely justified everything I have had the honour to say to Your Majesty."

"That is not what Lauriston said," said the Emperor. "Alexander must be pleased to have pushed things so far. His holy town is burned to the ground; his country has come to a pretty pass. He would have done better to come to terms. He has preferred to deliver himself into the hands of the English. Will they rebuild his burned cities? Lauriston says that the Tsar has been in negotiation with the English for a long time."

"Not in my time, Sire," I answered, "for he confiscated eighty of their vessels, and sold some; and others are still in confiscation."

<sup>1</sup> At two leagues from Wiasma. The *Itinéraire de Caulaincourt* notes the departure of the Emperor for Kneghinkino.

<sup>2</sup> He came to take up once more his duties as aide-de-camp to the Emperor. On their departure from Petersburg Lauriston and the embassy staff had been sent by sea and were not able to disembark at Pillau before August 7th.

<sup>3</sup> Ratified after the passage of the Niemen.

"You have been duped, my good Master of the Horse!" rejoined the Emperor. "Their flatteries have turned your head."

"If I may be permitted to cast a doubt on what Your Majesty affirms, I would repeat that the Tsar Alexander only began to treat with them when our first gun was fired. All that has happened, and all that has been done, convinces me that he did not deceive me, and that Your Majesty has not been misled by me. The dates of the Turkish peace, and of the settlement with England, and the actual confiscation of English vessels about which Your Majesty is so doubtful, all these facts will be cleared up in time, and will prove my justification. Before six months pass Your Majesty will be acknowledging my frankness."

The Emperor seized this opportunity to speak bitterly once more about Turkey and Sweden, and to inveigh against M. de Bassano, to whom he attributed the failure of those Powers to co-operate. He agreed that the period when the peace with Turkey had been signed might turn out to be in favour of my assertions.

"But," he added ironically, "your friend Alexander is none the less a Greek, and false. Nevertheless, I owe him no grudge; I am even sorry, so far as he is concerned, that his country is suffering so severely. As soon as we can talk to one another, we shall soon come to an agreement, for I am only fighting a political war, and there are many ways of settling matters so that the Russians shall not be too disgruntled and assassinate him as they did his father."

The enemy did not leave a single man behind; they destroyed the warehouses and stores, burned their public buildings, and even the large houses. Some people believed that the burning of the cities and market-towns which we entered was due as much to the disorders of our vanguard as to the Cossack rear-guard, who cared little for Russia; I confess that at first I shared this opinion, not comprehending what object the Russians could have in destroying all their civilian buildings, and even private houses, which could not, after all, be of great service to us. Several persons spoke to

the Emperor about these fires, and he ordered my brother to take a strong detachment of the Guard on the following day and press the enemy so closely as to enter at the same time as the rear-guard, and thus satisfy himself as to what really happened, and whether the Russians actually did set fire to the town.<sup>1</sup> These orders were exactly obeyed. The enemy rear-guard was in position, but evacuated the town after a hot engagement. My brother entered Wiasma in hot haste with some sharpshooters. The town was already in flames in various places; he saw Cossacks set light to inflammable material, some of which he discovered in different spots where fire broke out before the Cossacks had left the town. He set our troops to subdue the fire; everyone worked his hardest and some houses were saved, together with supplies of grain, flour and brandy. At first everything was preserved from destruction, but that did not last long. It was ascertained from particulars supplied by some of the inhabitants who had stayed in their houses, and notably from a very intelligent baker, that complete arrangements had been made by a detachment of Cossack rear-guard long before our arrival, and that the place had been set on fire as soon as we came in sight. The fact is that in different houses, particularly those containing food supplies, combustibles had been methodically prepared and placed for this express purpose. In short, in that town, as in those we had seen and those we were yet to see, there was plain proof that the fire resulted simply from the measures ordered and prepared in advance.

These details, already furnished by inhabitants of other towns and villages, and which we had hitherto refused to believe, were confirmed with every step we took. Everyone was taken aback, the Emperor as well as his men, though he affected to turn this novel method of warfare into matter for

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon to Berthier, August 29, 1812, at two leagues behind Wiasma: "As soon as you are in a position to enter Wiasma, send the gendarmerie there, General Caulaincourt, the Paymaster of Headquarters and the small headquarters. It will be forbidden to bake bread in the ovens in the town, for fear of setting fire to the place, and the best police force possible will be established." (*Correspondance, 19156.*)

ridicule. He often spoke to us jokingly of "people who burn their houses to prevent us sleeping in them for a night." He did his best to circumvent the grave reflections to which this terrible measure gave birth concerning the consequences and duration of a war from the very outset of which the enemy was prepared to make such sacrifices. The Emperor certainly made the same reflections himself, but he did not profit by them.

In spite of these fires, after leaving Dorogobouje the first arrivals found abundance of food, brandy, and even wine. The horrible spectacle of this dreadful destruction was therefore less staggering to men able to fill their bellies and having well-filled haversacks and canteens. There had been such desperate want and privation, such exhaustion, and Russia had appeared at first such a bad country, that the thermometer of many men's feeling, opinions and reflections was to be found in the pit of their stomachs.

In Poland everything had been lacking; at Witepsk, by dint of infinite pain and care, we had fared meagrely; at Smolensk, by searching the countryside we had found standing crops, grain, flour, cattle and even forage, but no brandy or wine. After Dorogobouje all was in flames, but the shops and cellars were well stocked, even to the point of luxury. The houses were soon found to contain hiding-places where abundance of everything was discovered. The soldiers pillaged; nor could this be stopped, since there was no issue of rations, nor, as we were marching without transports and living from hand to mouth, could there be any such distribution. Most of the men fared well, even very well; it was the officers who sometimes suffered privation, for as they did not enter the houses until after they had been ransacked they could not share in the plunder. Thus the general or senior officer would be eating a piece of black bread at some soldiers' camp-fire where fowls were roasting alongside sheep, where ham was sizzling among hundreds of eggs. The luxury of the houses inside, their frequency, and size, were signs of the proximity of a great capital. Once again the soldiers became indefatigable.

The King of Naples, who was in command of the advance-

guard, often covered ten or a dozen leagues a day. The men were in the saddle from three o'clock in the morning until ten at night. As the sun never sank beneath the horizon the Emperor forgot that the day contained no more than four-and-twenty hours. The Carabineers and Cuirassiers had been put with the advance-guard as support; the men as well as the horses were worn out, and great numbers were lost. The roads were littered with dead horses, but every day and every moment the Emperor flattered himself that he was about to make contact with the enemy. He needed prisoners at any price; they were the only source of information about the Russian Army, as spies had become useless from the moment we crossed on to Russian soil. The knout, or Siberia, cooled the zeal of the cleverest and most intrepid spy; besides, it was extremely difficult to penetrate into the country and, above all, into the army. The only information received was by way of Wilna; nothing came to us direct. Our marches were too long and too rapid, and our cavalry were too exhausted to send out reconnoitring parties, or even patrols on the flanks. Thus the Emperor was often unaware of events two leagues away. Whatever price we were willing to pay to make prisoners, we made none; the Cossacks took better care of themselves than we did; their horses were better cared for than ours, and were more useful in a charge, being used only for that purpose and never being engaged in skirmishing.

By the end of the day our horses were so weary that a mere skirmish would cost us several brave fellows, their horses not being able to stand the pace. When our squadrons were recalled we saw troopers on foot, in the midst of the fray, dragging their horses by the bridle, and others obliged to abandon them altogether and escape on foot.

The Prince of Neuchâtel, Counts Durosnel and Lobau, and some other brave men in the Emperor's entourage, were continually presenting him with a picture of what was going on, and urging him to make the best of the means at his disposal, if he desired, as he said, to meet the enemy in battle or to push forward to Moscow. The Emperor listened to us, but as he always hoped to have on the morrow what escaped him that

day, he was led on and on despite himself, and forced to cover a dozen leagues when he had intended to make only five. Like everyone else he was amazed at this retreat of an army of a hundred thousand men, who did not leave a single straggler or a solitary wagon behind. Not even a horse to mount a guide was to be found within a radius of ten leagues; we were obliged to put them on our own horses. Often not even a man could be found to serve as guide to the Emperor. The same man often led us for three or four days through a country which he knew no better than ourselves. The vanguard was in the same plight.

While we were following the Russian army, powerless to obtain the least information about it, great changes were taking place in its formation. General Kutusoff, who had been summoned to the command in deference to the opinion of the nobles, joined it at Tsarewo, between Ghjat and Wiasma, on the 29th, without Napoleon being aware of the fact.<sup>1</sup>

Reinforcements flowed in from all quarters, and Miloradovich was daily expected to join the Russians.<sup>2</sup> At Petersburg, as at Moscow, there was a universal outcry for war and extermination of the invaders, while the Emperor Napoleon was flattering himself that his peaceful assurances would lead to negotiations. We were threatening the capital city; the holy city was burnt down and occupied by the French; we were at the gates of Ghjat, and the Tsar, who had sent M. de Balachoff to Wilna, vouchsafed no answer to the overtures made to him from Smolensk.

<sup>1</sup> On August 29th, Kutusof rejoined the army at Tsarewo, between Ghjat and Wiasma; Barclay kept in his own hands the command of the 1st Army, and Bagration that of the 2nd. In the meanwhile the Emperor Alexander had gone to Abo, where he saw the Crown Prince of Sweden on August 27th. A secret arrangement was signed on August 28th to postpone for one year the cession of Norway, which was guaranteed by the secret treaty of March 24 (April 5), 1812. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

<sup>2</sup> Miloradovich had rejoined the greater part of the Russian Army on August 27th. At the same time the Army was to be augmented by 10,000 men of the Moscow Militia, without uniforms and armed with pikes.

This change in the attitude and policy of the Petersburg cabinet ought to have opened the Emperor's eyes. This proud bearing of the conquered towards the conqueror ought to have opened his eyes to the dangers of the invasion; but the fatality in which the Emperor Napoleon trusted continued to harry him, and his star, which he hoped to make shine with renewed glory by raising it aloft over this polar land, was in its turn to pay to this iron clime the tribute which he had hitherto exacted from the Russians themselves and all the other peoples of Europe. As I have said, the army was very weary, the cavalry and artillery already in a deplorable state, and the light troops so reduced in numbers that carabineers and cuirassiers had to be used as a support to the advance guard.

On the 31st headquarters was established at the manor of Weliczewo with the King of Naples, while the enemy retreated by stages leaving only some Cossacks and occasionally one or two regiments of dragoons to cover their movement. Day and night the whole of our cavalry and part of the infantry were in full chase after them on foot, always in the hope of catching up with this foe who would never come to grips. The army had no means of subsistence save what was obtained by marauders, who were organized in detachments, and daily the Cossacks and peasants captured many men who were too venturesome. The more we advanced the more complete was the evacuation of the country. Not even old folk or the sick were to be found. We reached the point when even the advance guard was unable to procure a guide to tell them place names or give any information about the country; and this resulted in the utmost confusion and difficulty.

At last about two leagues in front of Ghjat, the advance guard captured a Cossack whose horse had been killed, and shortly afterwards a negro who called himself the cook of the Hetman Platow.<sup>1</sup> This latter fellow was taken as he was

<sup>1</sup> Count Matthew Ivanovitch Platow (August 6, 1757 to January 3, 1818) General of Cavalry and Attaman of the Don Cossacks. Thiers, who was acquainted with this incident, confused the Cossack and the negro, and combined them into a single person, whom he made a "Cossack, gunner in Platow's Corps." (Thiers, XIV, 288.)

leaving a village where he had been pillaging. The King of Naples sent them both to the Emperor, who plied them with questions. Their replies struck me as so odd that they were worth noting.

The negro gave us particulars of the mode of life of his general, upon whom he always waited at table. He thus heard the conversation that went on, and was able to recount the rivalries of some of the generals, who were jealous of one another; but he knew nothing of the army's marching movements. He kept on asking to whom he was talking, before whom he had been brought, at the same time making the most comical grimaces and contortions. He and the Cossack had to be told again and again that it was the Emperor himself who was interrogating them, for neither would believe that it could be the Emperor Napoleon himself marching with the vanguard and so near their Cossack friends, for they could not believe that the Tsar would ever go so near the enemy.

"Platow sometimes comes to the vanguard," said the negro, "but he does not march with them like this; nor does he stay with them. As for the Russian generals, they never go with the Cossacks, nor even with the Russian troops. If the Russians were to be in the van with the Cossacks, the French would not be at the gates of Ghjat, for there are many more Russians and Cossacks than there are French, and the Cossack are not afraid of the French."

When told once again that it was the Emperor he was speaking to, he bowed, prostrated himself several times, and then began to dance, sing, and make every imaginable contortion. This negro assured the King of Naples, who had no guide, that he knew the entire countryside, and His Majesty asked that the man should be sent back to him, and this was done.

The Emperor then had the Cossack brought before him. He had been kept to one side while the negro was being questioned; he was a man between thirty and thirty-six years of age, dark, five foot high, with quick eyes, an open and intelligent face, a serious air and was apparently much distressed at finding himself a prisoner. He was especially

troubled at having lost his horse, his money, and what he called his little package, that is to say the effects he had taken or stolen, which he carried on his saddle and used for padding out his seat. The Emperor told me to give him some gold pieces, and lent him a horse from the stables; this consoled him, and his confidence was soon restored; he then talked as much as was wanted.

Attached to the rear-guard, he had seen nothing of the main army since Smolensk; it had suffered greatly in what he called the battle, that is to say at Smolensk. It would fight another battle in front of Moscow. The Russians complained bitterly of Barclay, who, they said, had prevented them from fighting at Wilna or Smolensk by shutting them up in the town. Kutusoff had reached the army to replace Barclay two days previously. The Cossack had not seen him, but a young staff-officer had come on the previous day to speak to the Cossack officer and had disclosed this news, adding that the nobles had forced the Tsar to make this change, and it was warmly welcomed by the army. This news, which seemed highly probable to the Emperor, afforded him the greatest pleasure, and he repeated it to everyone.

Barclay's temporizing nature was wearing him out. This retreat in which nothing was abandoned, despite the inconceivable activity of the pursuers, gave no hopes of obtaining from such an adversary the result he so much desired.

"This plan of theirs," the Emperor would sometimes remark, "will give me Moscow. But a good battle would finish the war sooner and lead us to peace, and that is where we are bound to finish in the end."

On learning of Kutusoff's arrival, he immediately observed with an air of satisfaction that the Russian general could not have come for the purpose of continuing the retreat. He would certainly give battle; he would as certainly lose it, and deliver Moscow to us, for he was too near the capital to save it. Thanks were due to the Tsar for having made this change at such a moment, which could not have been more propitious. The Emperor commended Marshal Kutusoff on the score of his intelligence, but spoke of his ineptitude at

Austerlitz and of his manoeuvres there and in Turkey,<sup>1</sup> adding that, with the finest army the Russians had ever had on the Danube, he had not been able to make peace at the gates of Constantinople, or to seize Wallachia. With an enfeebled and demoralized army he would certainly not prevent the French from reaching Moscow. Kutusoff would have to give battle in order to please the nobles, and in a fortnight the Tsar would have neither a capital nor an army. True, this army would have had the honour of not yielding the ancient capital without a struggle, and this was probably the Tsar's intention in making this change in the command, as he could then make peace without incurring the reproaches and censure of the high nobles, who had chosen Kutusoff, and upon whom, in consequence, could be imputed the effects of any reverses they might encounter. Undoubtedly, this had been his motive in yielding to his nobles.

The Emperor continued to question the Cossack, whose answers were all given with a note of remarkable intelligence for a private soldier. This is what he said :

"If Alexander's Russian soldiers, especially his generals, were like the Cossacks, you and your Frenchmen would not be in Russia," he told the Emperor. "If Napoleon had had Cossacks in his army he would have been Emperor of China long ago. It is the Cossacks who do all the fighting; it is always their turn. While the Russians sleep the Cossacks keep watch. The Cossacks will defend Moscow because of Alexander, who is a good prince, though his ministers and generals are deceiving him. His generals only fight when they have to; they have given up Smolensk the Holy and that is a bad sign. If Moscow is taken and the French enter the Cossack country, Russia is lost. Cossacks are good soldiers; they will have done their duty to the very last, and then they will side with Napoleon. Napoleon is a great general; Alexander is a good Tsar. If he liked, Alexander

<sup>1</sup> Michel Hilarionovitch Golemnitchef Kutusoff, Prince Smolenskoi (1745-1813), was in command of the Russian Army at Austerlitz, where he was wounded in the cheek. In 1811 he commanded the same army against the Turks.

would be the best general in Russia. Russian generals are too fond of their ease; they sleep too much; they must have cushions and every comfort; they only think of themselves, not of their soldiers' needs. The French fight well, but they do not keep a good look-out. They like to pillage; they slip away from their units to hunt through houses, and the Cossacks profit by this and capture large numbers every day, and recover their booty from them. Had it not been for the Cossacks the French would have been in Moscow, in Petersburg, even in Kazan. It is the Cossacks who hold them up every day. The Cossacks like the King of Naples, who makes a fine show, for he is a brave fellow and always the first to come under fire. Word has gone round that he is not to be killed, but they want to take him prisoner."

He told us that at Wiasma the Cossacks had prepared everything for burning the bridge, the shops and various houses. He said it had been ordered by their commander.

We found Ghjat<sup>1</sup> partly burned and still smoking. They had been caught at work sooner than at Wiasma. Attempts were made to stop the fire. The Emperor made an extended reconnaissance in front of, and all round, the city; he visited the hospital, which lay at the town gate and had not been burned. He hurried on the rebuilding of the bridges and the crossing of the troops. He did not return until very late. Even fewer of the inhabitants had been left in Ghjat than in Wiasma. Houses in the street where the Emperor had his quarters, and those along the riverside left intact, were full of provisions of all sorts; fine flour, plenty of eggs, and butter, all of which we had long lacked. The Emperor received positive details about the Russian army. Kutusoff had arrived on the 29th, having passed and returned through Ghjat. It was said that Miloradovitch had joined the army with 50,000 men and a large number of guns. The Emperor estimated this reinforcement at no more than 30,000 men.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor arrived at Ghjat at two o'clock in the afternoon of September 1st.

<sup>2</sup> Miloradovich had actually no more than 15,000 under his command.

Russian officers seemed very glad of Kutusoff's arrival, and had no doubt that he would fight a big battle in a few days. The army was continuing its retreat in order to join up with the reinforcements coming out from Moscow.

From these particulars, which confirmed all the Emperor's notions, he no longer doubted that the time had at last come for the battle he so ardently desired. He went over with relish all he had heard, adding the following reflections: "The new general cannot continue this plan of retreat, which is condemned by national opinion. He has been summoned to command the army on condition that he fights; therefore, the system of warfare pursued hitherto must be changed."

These considerations decided the Emperor to prepare likewise for action. He spent the 2nd and 3rd at Ghjat in order to collect his troops and give the cavalry and artillery some rest. His mind was also occupied with the certainty of General Latour-Maubourg reaching Esmakowa with his Division on September 1st.<sup>1</sup>

Feeling the necessity of restoring some order among the convoys which were blocking the roads, and so giving the artillery a chance of getting to the front in readiness for the battle which he deemed imminent, the Emperor gave orders that all vehicles<sup>2</sup> in front of the convoys of material should be burned. "I will even have my own carriage burned," he said to me next day, "if it is out of its proper place."

Proceeding on horseback, the Emperor came across a number of carriages being driven out of the column alongside an artillery train. He made the chasseurs of his bodyguard stop them, and leaping from his horse, ordered the leading one to be burned. Representations were made to him, and M. de Narbonne pointed out that this might possibly mean the stranding of some officer who might lose his leg on the morrow.

<sup>1</sup> General de Latour-Maubourg was in command of the 4th Cavalry Corps. On August 24th, he had sent him an order to move between Velnia and Dorogobouje in order to take part in the expected battle. (*Correspondance*, 19131.)

<sup>2</sup> Order of the day dated September 1, 1812 from the Imperial camp at Ghjat. (*Correspondence*, 19168.)

"It will cost me much more if I have no artillery tomorrow," answered the Emperor.

Straw and wood had to be fetched to start the fire. While this was going on a calèche was dismantled, and a light trap following was consigned to the same fate. As soon as the fire was lit the Emperor galloped off, and the drivers, I think, salvaged their somewhat singed vehicles.<sup>1</sup>

"I wish it had been your carriage," said the Emperor to the Prince of Neuchâtel. "It would look better, and you deserve to lose it, I am always coming across it."

"Behind Your Majesty's carriage," answered the Prince.

"It is Caulaincourt's fault," rejoined the Emperor. "Anyhow, I have promised to burn it if I come upon it. Do not be put out at my threat, for I will show no more mercy to my own carriage than to anyone else's. I am commander-in-chief, and I must set an example."<sup>2</sup>

On the 4th, headquarters was in bivouac near Prokofewo,<sup>3</sup> and on the 5th and 6th near Borodino.<sup>4</sup> M. de Bausset<sup>5</sup> arrived during the afternoon of the 6th. He brought letters from the Empress, who had accompanied him as far as Prague on the way from Dresden, and he was also the bearer of a fine portrait by Gerard<sup>6</sup> of the King of Rome. The Emperor

<sup>1</sup> According to Castellane (*Journal* I, 145), this scene took place on September 3rd, and the carriage burned was that of M. de Narbonne himself. "When His Majesty had gone on," Castellane adds, "this General (Narbonne) came back to his carriage and gave ten louis to the soldiers who had put out the fire which they themselves had lit."

<sup>2</sup> It is to be observed that Caulaincourt makes no mention of Napoleon's violent rating of Berthier, which took place at Ghjat, and as a result of which the Major-General ceased to take his meals with the Emperor until they reached Mojaisk. This is related in several contemporary memoirs, notably by Dennée, *Itinéraire*, p. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Other witnesses say near the post of Ghridnewo.

<sup>4</sup> At the bivouac in the middle of a square of the Old Guard.

<sup>5</sup> Louis François de Bausset was one of the Prefects of the Palace, February 1, 1805.

<sup>6</sup> See *Mémoires anecdotiques sur l'intérieur du Palais de Napoléon*, by L. F. J. de Bausset, II, 103.

found this portrait hung up in his tent when he returned from a reconnaissance of the enemy posts.<sup>1</sup> The aide-de-camp of the Duke of Ragusa<sup>2</sup> had arrived at the same time with reports of the bad state of affairs in Spain.<sup>3</sup> The courier from Paris had brought him advance news of this some days previously, but the affairs of Russia were too serious at the moment for him to pay much attention to the Duke of Ragusa's reverses in the Peninsula.

"The English have their hands full there, they cannot leave Spain to go and make trouble for me in France or Germany. That is all that matters," he said to me next day.

The Emperor stayed only a moment in his tent,<sup>4</sup> which was pitched, as usual, in the middle of the Guards' square, but set off at once towards the attack which our right was making against two redoubts supporting the enemy's left. This attack was carried out with such vigour that we were masters

<sup>1</sup> This portrait was hung in the Emperor's room throughout his stay at the Kremlin. It was lost during the retreat. Happily Gerard had made several copies of it, and it had also been engraved. On August 23rd, M. Debonnaire de Gif, auditor of the Council of State, had already taken to Napoleon at Smolensk, as a gift from Madame de Montesquiou, a miniature by Mlle Aimée Thibault representing the King of Rome sitting on a sheep. Cf. Frédéric Masson, *Napoléon et son fils*, 230.

<sup>2</sup> This aide-de-camp was Captain Charles Fabvier, the future general and hero of the Philhellenic struggles, appointed aide-de-camp (April, 1811) to Marmont, who commanded the army which Massena had brought back from Portugal after an unfortunate campaign. Fabvier was wounded at Arapiles, July 22, 1812. A fortnight later he started from Burgos and arrived at Paris on August 17th. He rejoined the Emperor on the evening of September 6th. Cf. Debidour, *Le Général Fabvier*, 58.

<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of 1812 Marmont was forced to retreat before Wellington, who had taken Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz. The Duke of Ragusa had been beaten at Arapiles on July 22, 1812.

<sup>4</sup> Caulaincourt, who had been relating the events of September 6th here returns to September 5th.

of the forts in less than an hour.<sup>1</sup> The troops were ordered to remain in position and the infantry in square. This was a wise act of foresight on the part of the Emperor, because half an hour after dusk, and long after the action had taken place, Russian cuirassiers supported by infantry charged on our squares with great vigour, making for the redoubts, which they certainly hoped to force us to evacuate and allow them to occupy during the confusion of a night attack.<sup>2</sup> The first square, taken unawares, lost its artillery and some men; the others, put on their guard by the firing, held firm, and the Russian cuirassiers, badly mauled by our guns and musket-fire and ill-supported in their attack, were obliged to retire and leave us these redoubts, which were the key of their position. Our troops even gained a little ground when they pursued them in the dark, and we established ourselves at the edge of a wood which it was of the utmost importance for the enemy to retain, if only to delay our attack and afford a post from which to observe our movements.

During the night the Emperor visited our bivouacs, inspected the captured redoubts, and rode several times up and down the line to judge with his own eyes as to the enemy positions and their strength at each point. At the same time he saw his troops, as was his custom on the eve of battle. He had already visited the different corps during the afternoon, and had to some extent held up his final dispositions and orders, being still undecided whether he would not attack on the following morning, so apprehensive was he that the enemy would once again escape him.

At daybreak<sup>3</sup> the Emperor went once more to the principal redoubt, and under cover of the wood, the whole of which had been occupied during the night, he and the Prince of

<sup>1</sup> The attack of the Schwardino redoubt by the Compans Division (4th of the 1st Corps). The action, which began at four o'clock in the afternoon, was ended victoriously by five o'clock. This action gave Mérimée the subject for his *Enlèvement de la redoute, in Mosaïque, 1822.*

<sup>2</sup> Charge of the Douka Curassiers against the 111th of the Line.

<sup>3</sup> September 6, 1812.

Neuchâtel and myself approached very close to the enemy position. His Majesty then traversed the whole extent of the lines, more particularly the centre and the left, which he reconnoitred as far as the outposts. He returned once again to the centre accompanied by the King of Naples, so that he could explain all his dispositions on the spot. He then visited the extreme right, which was under the command of Prince Poniatowski, who had fought a brilliant engagement at the head of his Poles on the previous day and had gained much ground.<sup>1</sup> The resistance of the Russians at this point was not what it ought to have been, nor what it had been elsewhere. The Emperor hesitated whether he should make a wide movement on his right to turn the enemy position and partly avoid his redoubts, or whether he should simply take advantage of the two redoubts he had captured, and engage the centre from the front and flank by launching an attack with our right. He was apprehensive lest the first of these plans, which would have threatened the enemy from the rear, would decide the Russians to make another retreat, especially as the loss of the redoubts which had been captured the previous day had greatly weakened their position. These considerations determined him to adopt the latter plan.

Seeing the enemy tranquil in their positions, the Emperor decided to let the army rest during that day, while this would also give him an opportunity of bringing into the line the artillery reserves, and whatever had got slightly to the rear. He also thought—and this last consideration determined him—that the enemy, who had come at nightfall to retake the redoubts essential to the support of their left, would make some efforts during the day to recapture that position, or at least make some efforts to recover the ground gained by the Poles. If they did this, the Emperor hoped for an engagement which would produce exceedingly advantageous results for himself; but the day was spent on both sides in observing one another, except on the part of the Poles, who gained a little more ground, thus allowing us a very advantageous

<sup>1</sup> On the 5th. Poniatowski had supported the attack of Compan by debouching from the wood in time.

deployment on the enemy's flank for the attack of the morrow. Seeing that the Russians had not stirred, the Emperor came to the conclusion that they had constructed new field works to replace those they had lost the previous day. About three o'clock it was even thought that they were retiring, and the Emperor, who was constantly watching them, was on the point of launching an attack; but a closer inspection from places which permitted the movements of the Russians to be better understood, it was ascertained that they were in their same positions. That evening the Emperor returned to his tent.<sup>1</sup>

He was at the redoubt on the right before dawn on the 7th,<sup>2</sup> and, together with the Prince of Eckmühl, Berthier and myself, went to the edge of the wood in front. As soon as daylight came the Emperor's order of the day was read to the troops. It was brief but forcible, like all those written by himself on great occasions.<sup>3</sup>

The Poles, the King of Naples with his cavalry, who were on the left, and the Prince of Eckmühl's troops, were in motion before daybreak. Their attack was impetuous, and the defence stubborn. Prince Bagration, facing them, resisted vigorously and tenaciously, but our troops were so full of enthusiasm that nothing could stop them. General Compans, who was wounded in these first attacks,<sup>4</sup> was replaced by General Rapp, who shared a like fate at the head of the same

<sup>1</sup> Pitched on the heights opposite Borodino.

<sup>2</sup> September 7th, the day of the battle of the Moskowa, the Emperor was in the saddle at three in the morning.

<sup>3</sup> *Correspondance, 19182.* At the imperial camp on the heights of Borodino, September 7th, two o'clock in the morning.

<sup>4</sup> Jean Dominique Compans, born at Salies-du-Salat (Huate Gironne), June 26, 1769; died at Blagnac (Haute Gironne), November 10, 1845. He was General of Division from November 23, 1806. In 1812 he commanded the 5th Division of the 1st Corps (Davout). On September 7th the Compans division was placed at the extreme right of the French line, at the head of Davout's corps and attacked the advance points that covered the enemy's left. At half-past seven Compans was wounded with a musket shot that struck his right shoulder. Cf. *Le Général Compans*, by Ternaux-Compans, 184.

brave fellows.<sup>1</sup> Generals who were killed or wounded were replaced without the least sensation being caused, without the action being in the least delayed, even when the Prince of Eckmühl was himself hit.<sup>2</sup>

Marshal Ney overwhelmed and broke up the advance corps of the centre with his usual boldness. At seven o'clock there was at this point a cannonade and a roar of musket-fire such as has not often been heard. In the meanwhile the King of Naples backed up with his cavalry the impetuous attack of the infantry on the right and the Prince of Eckmühl's corps, and the two remaining fieldworks of the Russians on their left were taken.

At eight o'clock the Emperor was informed that Montbrun,<sup>3</sup> General of Division and commanding the 1st Cavalry Corps, composed of three divisions, had been killed. He recalled my brother,<sup>4</sup> whom he had sent to the attack on the right and who came up a moment later to announce the taking of the two redoubts and the subsequent successes.

<sup>1</sup> When he heard that Compans had been wounded, Napoleon sent his aide-de-camp, General Rapp, to take command of his Division. Within an hour Rapp was wounded four times, first by two gun shots, then by a bullet in the left arm which ripped away the cloth of his sleeve, his tunic and his shirt to the skin, then by a musket shot which wounded his left hip and threw him off his horse. He was then replaced in his command by General Desais. (*Mémoires de Rapp*, 206.)

<sup>2</sup> Some moments after the 57th had pierced the right wing Marshal Davout had his horse killed under him. He fell to the ground and lost consciousness. When he came to, although suffering severely, he desired to remain in command of his army corps.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Pierre Montbrun, born at Florensac March 1, 1770, had been promoted General of Division on March 9, 1809. He did not command the 1st Cavalry Corps, as Caulaincourt says, but the 2nd, Reserve Cavalry Corps, which had been under his orders since January 9, 1812. During the cavalry charge led by Ney and Murat at the right of the line on September 7th, Montbrun was fatally wounded by a bullet.

<sup>4</sup> General Auguste de Caulaincourt, as was mentioned above, was aide-de-camp to the Emperor and Commandant of Imperial Headquarters.

"Go and take command of the 1st Cavalry Corps," the Emperor said to him. "Do as you did at Arzobispo."<sup>1</sup>

The Prince of Neuchâtel sent him a written order for the Generals of Division to see. My brother seized my hand, saying, "Things have become so hot that I don't suppose I shall see you again. We will win, or I shall get myself killed."

His chronic sufferings often made him desire death; did they now conjure up in him this mournful presentiment? Or was it possibly the heat of the action? I do not know, but I could not rid my mind of this ominous farewell until an even more fatal event occurred to confirm the foreboding which had overtaken me.

Supported by one of the Viceroy's corps, Marshal Ney was backing up the right, and by ten o'clock the enemy had lost all the ground in front of their great centre redoubt. They had consequently lost the position on the left and the village that supported their centre;<sup>2</sup> but their reserves were coming up. For a moment success hovered between the two sides towards our right, and we even had to draw in our advance troops to the main body while falling back on the captured redoubts.

A formidable array of guns spat forth death in every direction; the Russian infantry made fresh efforts to regain their lost ground. Their chief redoubt belched out a veritable hell on our centre. In vain did Marshal Ney and the Viceroy combine their forces to attack it; they were repulsed. Returning to the attack a second time, they were no more fortunate,

<sup>1</sup>Auguste de Caulaincourt had been promoted General of Division on September 7, 1809, as a reward for his brilliant services during the passage of the Tagus by the united corps of Soult, Mortier and Ney. "On the 8th (August, 1809) Marshal Mortier, having ordered the dragoons of the 5th and 2nd Corps under the command of General de Caulaincourt to wade across the river, captured the fortified bridge of Arzobispo in brilliant style and dispersed all the forces that the Duke of Albuquerque had mustered, to oppose the passage of the river and the occupation of the left bank." (*Guerre d'Espagne, Extrait des souvenirs inédits du Général Jomini*, by Ferdinand Lecomte, 110. Cf. *Moniteur* of September 28, 1809.)

<sup>2</sup> Borodino.

and Ney even lost a little ground. A section of the Guard, who had followed by echelons the movement of the corps which united the centre to the right, took up a position from which, if necessary, they could support this corps if the momentary forced retirement should become more serious. But our artillery checked the dash of the enemy, who for a long time stood firm under the fire of a devastating bombardment. Finally they were forced to yield the ground which we had previously taken from them.

All this time the Emperor was watching the movements of the centre; he had stationed himself opposite the last redoubt we had taken, and he gave a general order to halt for the moment and hold the positions we occupied until the artillery had had time to demolish, as he said, those masses of infantry which stood so motionless. It was then nearly eleven o'clock. Shortly before this Lieutenant-General Belitchef<sup>1</sup> and some fifteen prisoners taken in the redoubt were brought to him. The officer in charge of them told the Emperor that they had put up a gallant defence. The Emperor received the General well. Seeing his prisoner without his sword, Napoleon expressed his regret that he had been disarmed.

"I respect the courage of the unfortunate too much, sir," he said, "not to give myself the pleasure of returning his arms to a brave man."

With that he handed the General his sword, and asked him some questions. He then gave orders that the other prisoners should be questioned, taken care of, and treated, as the General had been, with the utmost respect.

This capture gave the Emperor great pleasure, but it was inconceivable to him how it was that so few prisoners had been taken, when these redoubts had been captured in such a rush and entirely surrounded by the King of Naples's cavalry. He complained bitterly, and asked a great number of questions about it, not concealing the fact that he had desired and hoped for other results.

<sup>1</sup> Caulaincourt has confused the names, for the Russian General made prisoner in the redoubt was Likatcheff, who, although a very elderly man, commanded a Russian division.

"We shall win the battle," he said. "The Russians will be crushed, but it will not be conclusive if I do not take prisoners."

He showed signs of anxiety. Between noon and one o'clock the Emperor ordered the Viceroy to resume the offensive and support the left of Marshal Ney, who was already supporting General Junot. The right, reinforced by the Young Guard, likewise had orders to push forward. The enemy, smashed by the guns, and pressed simultaneously on all points, massed their troops and held firm despite the ravages made in their ranks by the guns. The Emperor then climbed into the redoubt to follow with his own eyes and direct the general movement he had ordered all along the line. Our troops redoubled their efforts without gaining ground. The fire increased to greater intensity; we were at grips at all points. It was at this moment that my brother, having put in motion two of his divisions supported by two battalions of infantry, placed himself at the head of the 5th Cuirassiers to lead the troops under his command on the great redoubt and thus ensure the success of this attack, already attempted in vain several times. He drove out the enemy,<sup>1</sup> and from that moment the battle was won, as the Emperor himself said, for the Russians at once began a general retreat. I think it was about three o'clock when an aide-de-camp arrived in hot haste to tell the Emperor that the great redoubt had been taken by my brother and that the enemy was retiring at all points. An

<sup>1</sup> "Nevertheless a cavalry corps dashes out on the left. Montbrun is no longer at their head; a cannon ball has wounded him. It is Auguste de Caulaincourt who leads them. They increase their gallop, pass the great redoubt in the centre, close in beyond it and soon disappear in a cloud of dust and smoke. Suddenly the bayonets of Prince Eugène glitter on the farther side of the redoubt. Assailed on all sides, the volcano thunders, flashes, vomits torrents of fire, that are redoubled and then suddenly extinguished. General Likatcheff has tendered his sword, but his soldiers fight to the death. Woeful doggedness! Auguste Caulaincourt and Lanabère, their conquerors, are at grips with them in the redoubt itself. The cuirassiers have made their way in by the ravine at the same moment that Eugène's men are scaling the parapets." (*Fain, Manuscrit de 1813*, II, 35.)

instant later M. Wolbert, my unfortunate brother's aide-de-camp, who had not quitted his side, brought the Emperor the details of this affair, and told him that my brother had been killed by a bullet below the heart just as he was coming out of the redoubt to pursue the enemy, who had rallied at some distance and were advancing to retake it. I was at the Emperor's side when this report was brought.<sup>1</sup> I need not attempt to describe my feelings.

<sup>1</sup> Writing of those events, Ségur says: "Messengers were hastened to inform the Emperor of this victory and this loss. The Master of the Horse, brother of the unfortunate General, heard the news. At first he was overcome, but he soon steeled himself in face of this misfortune, and save for the tears that rolled silently down his cheeks, he appeared impassive. The Emperor said, 'You have heard the news; would you like to retire?' He accompanied these words with an exclamation of sympathy. But at that moment we were advancing against the enemy. The Master of the Horse made no reply; he did not retire, he merely lifted his hat slightly as a token of his gratitude and refusal." (De Ségur, *Histoire de Napoléon et de la Grande Armée*, I, 401.) In his *Mémoires* (205) Rapp adds the following detail: "A soldier hidden in an embrasure laid him out. He slept the sleep of the brave." Castellane (*Journal*, I, 150) confirms Ségur's account: "His brother, the Duke of Vicenza, learned the news in a cruel manner. He was at the Emperor's side; and an aide-de-camp came up sobbing, to announce the death of his General. The Emperor turned round and said to the Duke of Vicenza, 'You have heard the sad news; go to my tent.' The Master of the Horse remained in the saddle." François Georges Louis Wolbert, born May 10, 1774, at Chatenois (Bas-Rhin) adjutant in the train of the Army of the Rhine from June 1, 1793, to October 16, 1794, *émigré* and sentenced to death by default, was admitted as non-commissioned officer in the Viomenil Regiment, December 12, 1794, and became *chasseur noble* (12th company) March 1, 1796. On September 8, 1800, he was purged of his default, entered the 19th Dragoons, 18 Brumaire Year X, was made corporal on 22 Pluviose, sergeant-major 5 Germinal, regimental sergeant-major 18 Fructidor, second lieutenant March 3, 1807, lieutenant in December, 1811, aide-de-camp to Caulaincourt in April, 1812, first lieutenant in the Guards Dragoons September 23, 1812, retired on half-pay September 1, 1814, cavalry captain January 20, 1815, captain commandant in the gendarmerie of the Rhone May 9, 1815, retired commandant in the gendarmerie of the Rhone May 9, 1815, retired from the

*Continued on next page*

"He has died as a brave man should," said the Emperor, "and that is, in deciding the battle. France loses one of her best officers."

His Majesty immediately set off at a gallop in front of the cavalry to join the King of Naples and make such dispositions as he considered necessary to assure and follow up this success. Marshal Ney and the Viceroy had supported the decisive movement of General Caulaincourt. The enemy's attack in order to retake the great redoubt was in vain, and the Russians were forced to retreat along the whole of their front.

One redoubt still remained to them as well as a small fieldwork that commanded the Moscow road, and it seemed as though they wished to hold them. A thin wood covered their march and concealed their movements from us at this point. The Emperor flattered himself that the Russians were going to hasten their retreat, and he reckoned on hurling his cavalry on them in an attempt to break them. The Young Guard and the Poles were already on the march towards these outworks which the Russians kept. In order to make out their movements the Emperor went with the sharpshooters. Bullets whistled around him; but he had made his escort stay behind. Seeing me at his side the Emperor told me to go back.

"It is over," he said. "Go and wait for me at headquarters."

I thanked him but remained with him. The Emperor was certainly running a great risk, as the fusillade became so lively that the King of Naples and several Generals hurried up to urge him to retire.

The Emperor then went in front of the columns that were coming up. The Old Guard followed them; the carabiniers and the cavalry marched in echelon. The Emperor seemed determined to carry these last Russian fieldworks, but the Prince of Neuchâtel and the King of Naples pointed out to

active list February 9, 1816, captain in the Garde de Paris September 6, 1830 (with seniority from October 25, 1815), major September 19, 1832, retirement gazetted August 14, 1835. (*Archives administratives de la Guerre*, general classification.)

him that the troops were marching thither without any commander, that nearly all the divisions in the army had likewise been deprived of their commanding officers through death or wounds, that the regiments of cavalry and infantry were, as he could see, greatly reduced in strength. They added that it was growing late, and that though the enemy were certainly retreating, they were doing so in good order and showing an inclination to dispute every inch of the ground tenaciously, whatever the havoc wrought by our guns in their ranks. They also urged that the only chance of success was to use the Old Guard for the attack, and that in the existing circumstances success at such a price would really be a check, while failure would be a reverse that would counterbalance the entire success of the battle. Finally they urged him not to engage the only corps in the whole army which remained intact and ought to be kept so for future occasions.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor hesitated; then he went forward once more to observe for himself the enemy's movements.

Meanwhile the King of Naples and the Prince of Neuchâtel had, in different directions, reached the walls of these redoubts. They rejoined the Emperor, whom they assured that the Russians were in position and, far from retreating, several corps were massing, with the bearing of men determined to retreat no longer. All the successive reports represented our losses as very considerable. The Emperor came to a decision. He suspended the order for an attack and contented himself with sending up supports for the corps still engaged, in case the enemy should wish to attempt something fresh, which was not likely as their own losses were also immense. Night-

<sup>1</sup> It would be superfluous to emphasize the importance of Caulaincourt's testimony on the subject of the intervention and opinion of Berthier and Murat. The Emperor's hesitation at this juncture surprised all observers, but historians have attributed it either to the state of Napoleon's health, which will be considered farther on, or to the impression created in his mind by the hecatomb of the battlefield. It is clear that Berthier and Murat themselves considered it useless and dangerous to order the intervention of the Guard, which was the only corps left intact to enable the Emperor to consolidate his victory.

fall put an end to the fighting. Both sides were so weary that in several places firing ceased without orders having been given. At night the Emperor established his headquarters at the spot where he had taken up his stand at the beginning of the battle, on this side of the redoubts.

Never had a battle cost so many Generals and officers.<sup>1</sup> Success was hardly won, and the fire was so murderous that Generals, like their subordinate officers, had to pay in their persons for their victory. We did all we could for the wounded whilst the battle was raging and during the night that followed, but most of the houses in the vicinity of the battle-field had been burned during the day, and in consequence many casualty stations passed the night in the open. There were very few prisoners. The Russians showed the utmost tenacity; their fieldworks and the ground they were forced to yield were given up without disorder. Their ranks did not break; pounded by the artillery, sabred by the cavalry, forced back at the bayonet-point by our infantry, their somewhat immobile masses met death bravely, and only gave way slowly before the fury of our attacks. Never had ground been attacked with more fury and skill, or more stubbornly defended. Several times the Emperor repeated that it was quite inexplicable to him that redoubts and positions so audaciously captured and so doggedly defended should yield us so few prisoners. Several times he asked the officers who came with reports of our successes, where were the prisoners who ought to have been captured? He even sent orderlies to the various positions to make sure that no more had been taken. These successes, yielding neither prisoners nor trophies, made him discontented. Several times he said to the Prince of Neuchâtel and myself:

“These Russians let themselves be killed like automatons;

<sup>1</sup> The Generals who were killed were Montbrun, Caulaincourt, Damas, Lepel, Compere, Huard de Saint-Aubin, Marion, Romeuf, Breuning, Tharreau, Lanabère, Plauzonne (Noël Charavay, *Les Généraux morts pour la Patrie*, 88). “The returns I compiled from reports sent to the Major-General by the Chiefs of Staff of the different army corps . . . showed 49 general officers killed and wounded.” (Dennée, *Itinéraire*, 80.)

they are not taken alive. This does not help us at all. These citadels should be demolished with cannon."

That night the enemy was seen plainly to be starting to retreat. Orders were given for the army to follow their movements. At dawn on the following day<sup>1</sup> there were only Cossacks in sight, and they were two leagues away from the battlefield. The enemy had taken with them the great part of their wounded and we had only the few prisoners I have mentioned, twelve guns from the redoubt captured by my unfortunate brother, and three or four other pieces taken in the line by our troops during their first attack.

From early morning the Emperor was out in all parts of the battlefield, supervising with the utmost care the collection and removal of the wounded, Russian as well as French. Never was a battlefield so thickly strewn with dead. In the village round which the attack had centred,<sup>2</sup> the Russian dead lay in heaps. On the plateau behind it the ground was covered with the corpses of Litowski's and Ismaelowski's Guards, slaughtered by our guns. The Emperor carefully examined every portion of this battlefield, the positions of each corps, the movements they had made, the difficulties they had had to overcome. At each point he demanded minute details of everything that had happened, dealt out praise and encouragement, and was greeted by his troops with all their wonted enthusiasm.

I must record one incident which went to prove the cost of this bloody action to the French Army. Arriving at the second redoubt just when it was about to be taken, the Emperor noticed some sixty or eighty men, with four or five officers, remaining stationary on the battlefield in pursuance of orders received from their commanding officer. Astonished to find these men standing still when the rest of the troops had gone ahead, he asked the officer in charge why he was there.

"I have been ordered to stay here," was the answer.

"Rejoin your regiment," said the Emperor.

<sup>1</sup> September 8th.

<sup>2</sup> Borodino.

"It is here," replied the officer, pointing to the approaches and ditches before the redoubt.<sup>1</sup>

Not understanding his meaning, the Emperor asked again:

"I want to know where your regiment is. You must join up with it."

"It is here!" replied the officer, pointing to the same spots, and betraying his annoyance at the Emperor's failure to understand.

At that moment a young officer standing near this old campaigner came forward and explained to the Emperor that the regiment, being unable to capture the redoubt at the first attack, had dashed forward with such fury, and met with such a well-directed fusillade, that this detachment was all that remained of two battalions, the rest having all been killed or wounded, as he could see for himself. Indeed, from the colonel downward, all those brave fellows lay scattered round the redoubt, on the parapet, or in the places which they had penetrated but had been unable to hold in the first attack.

The Emperor examined in detail all the works thrown up by the Russians. I cannot describe my feelings as I passed over the ground which had been dyed by my brother's blood.<sup>2</sup> If the eulogies and the justice rendered by an entire

<sup>1</sup> This anecdote is narrated with some variations by Ségar, *Histoire de Napoléon I*, 352, who dates it on September 6th, the day after the capture of the Schwardino redoubt by the Compans division, and he attributes it to the colonel of the 61st Infantry Regiment of the line. It had already been told by Labaume (*Relation*, 131), who gives the same date. But the truth of the story has been contested by Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 205), who bases his criticism on the fact that the Schwardino redoubt was not taken by assault but was abandoned by the Russians. By dating it September 7th Caulaincourt makes the story seem more probable.

<sup>2</sup> "We followed in the train [of the Emperor] into this great redoubt, which had been captured at the price of so much blood and so many noble victims. Two of our party, yielding to a very natural grief, did not follow Napoleon: M. de Caulaincourt and M. de Canouville. With tears in their eyes they turned away from the spot that contained the glorious remains of their brothers." (Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 113.)

army to the memory of a brave man could have consoled me, I ought to have had peace in my heart.

After completing his reconnaissance the Emperor galloped off to the advance-guard. According to reports which he had received that morning from the King of Naples,<sup>1</sup> there were none but Cossacks to be seen. A very small number of stragglers were rounded up; the enemy had not abandoned so much as a cart. The King reckoned on passing Mojaisk, and made the Emperor agree to establishing headquarters there that evening; but when he arrived before the town he found it strongly held by enemy infantry and a large body of cavalry. A late start had been made, and the day was declining. Not being able to reconnoitre the position, we were obliged to come to a halt. The Emperor established himself in the village in front of Mojaisk;<sup>2</sup> the enemy evacuated the town during the night, our troops entering on the following day as dawn was breaking.<sup>3</sup> The Emperor went into the town towards noon. He was very much preoccupied, for the state of affairs in Spain was weighing him down just when those of Russia, in spite of this victorious battle, were far from satisfactory. The state of the various corps which he had seen was deplorable. All were sadly reduced in strength. His victory had cost him dear. When he had come to a halt on the previous evening he had felt convinced that this bloody battle, fought with an enemy who had abandoned nothing in their retreat, would have no result beyond allowing him to gain further ground. The prospect of entering Moscow still enticed him, however, but even that success would be inconclusive so long as the Russian Army remained unbroken. Everyone noticed that the Emperor was very thoughtful and worried, although he frequently repeated:

<sup>1</sup> Murat had been marching since morning on Mojaisk with two divisions of cuirassiers, several divisions of light cavalry, and one division of infantry.

<sup>2</sup> This village, called Ukarino according to our itinerary (but named Starokowno by Denniée), was a league from Mojaisk and had been burned. (Denniée, *Itinéraire*, 83.)

<sup>3</sup> The Friant division entered Mojaisk at seven o'clock on the morning of September 9th.

"Peace lies in Moscow. When the great nobles of Russia see us masters of the capital, they will think twice about fighting on. If I liberated the serfs it would smash all those great fortunes. The battle will open the eyes of my brother Alexander, and the capture of Moscow will open the eyes of his nobles."

These bold words of the Emperor were apparently uttered for the purpose of shaping opinion and distracting attention from the losses which he had sustained, rather than as an expression of his true convictions. Indeed, in his interviews with the Prince of Neuchâtel, the only person to whom he had spoken at length since the battle, he seemed very serious, and, from what the Prince told me, he kept repeating that a large number of men had been killed to no real purpose. No, prisoners, no booty—that was what chiefly vexed the Emperor, and formed the constant burden of his complaints. Knowing that the enemy was to be reinforced by recruits, and by militia corps that had not yet been able to join the army, he flattered himself that Kutusoff would offer battle once more before surrendering the capital, and that he would do so with a better grace as he would have a sword in one hand and peace proposals in the other.

According to the Prince of Neuchâtel, the Emperor was at that moment so eager to accept those terms, or to enter into negotiations, that he would even have hesitated to go beyond Mojaisk, were it not that he hoped and wished that the treaty should be signed at a place which would give some indication of his victory. At other times he definitely wanted to proceed to Moscow, stay there a week, and then retire on Smolensk. However, not admitting for a moment that the enemy would yield the capital without another battle, and having therefore no doubt that they would try to save the place by putting up a show of defending it at the same time as they opened negotiations, the Emperor only once entertained the hypothesis that he would have to enter the place by force of arms. He was persuaded that the indisputable fact of his advance would lead, if not to the preliminaries of peace, at least to a sort of armistice which would quickly bring it about.

"Swords have been crossed; honour is satisfied in the eyes of the world; and the Russians have suffered so much harm that there is no other satisfaction that I can ask of them. They will be no more anxious for me to pay them a second visit than I shall be to return to Borodino," said he.

I must confess that I found some difficulty in persuading myself that, even in his obvious interests, the Emperor could then have contemplated a halt without entering Moscow, when he was now so near that city. The Prince and I recalled our conversations at Witepsk and other places, and also those which we had had with the Emperor, and he told me that if we had been going to start on again the Emperor would not have got so near Moscow; that he would have announced his pacific intentions openly; and that if proposals for peace had come they would have been promptly accepted. He added that the Emperor would like to withdraw but only with honour.

The Prince of Neuchâtel was by no means blind to the possible consequences of this advance. My unfortunate brother's death had but served to increase our common forebodings. But the Emperor's frame of mind was only the effect of momentary embarrassment, and was changed as soon as these embarrassments ceased or sonic petty success had been gained. The bad state of affairs in Spain, the appalling results of our last battle, all tended to preserve that attitude of moderation which the Emperor then displayed. As for ourselves, we were perfectly agreed that there was no way of finishing this war except by quitting Moscow (provided the enemy yielded it to us) forty-eight hours after entering it and returning to Witepsk.

The Emperor remained at Mojaisk on the 11th and 12th.<sup>1</sup> He was unwell,<sup>2</sup> preoccupied, and saw no one except such of

<sup>1</sup> Arriving at Mojaisk on the 9th, the Emperor stayed in the square on the first floor of a house that was being built. (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 45.)

<sup>2</sup> He was suffering from a complete loss of voice, which made him unable to speak or dictate. Besides this, Ségur (*Histoire et Mémoires*, VI, 14) says that Napoleon had been taken with an attack of bladder trouble on the 4th, and could not be relieved

his Marshals as passed through. None of us had access to him. The town had not been burned, but very few of the inhabitants remained. The Emperor persuaded himself that the Russians had given up their systematic arson and destruction, and from this immediately began to draw good auguries for the future. He was confirmed in his idea that a settlement would be reached. The Russians continued their retreat with the same good order, taking their wounded with them, and not leaving as much as a nail behind. The Emperor spent these two days in organizing the hospitals as best he could and most of the wounded were conveyed to these.

We had few resources, as I have said, but the devotion of the hospital staff and their unflagging zeal, which was supported by all branches of the administration, accomplished more than it had been possible to hope for in the circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Many of the wounded, nevertheless, were left for some time on the battlefield in wretched sheds. The survivors suffered extreme privations through the scarcity of all necessities, as can easily be understood if we recall the state of our ambulances when we reached Witepsk.

Still on the march, our plight could not be improved, whatever steps had been taken. The Emperor had given explicit orders to the War Office that surgeons should be sent and a large supply of hospital necessities, for he eventually decided to authorize the outlay which the ministry had required and which he had hoped to save by calling upon the resources of the country as he had done on his other campaigns.<sup>2</sup>

A certain number of surgeons had been sent, but the supplies until after the arrival in Moscow. In support of this he produces certificates signed by Yvan, the Emperor's surgeon, and Mestivier, his physician. Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 250) denies this indisposition and writes that "Napoleon was in his usual health, working with his customary zest, and tiring out several horses." In fact, on the day of the battle of the Moskowa, according to the *Itinéraire*, he rode three horses, Lutzelberg, Emir and Courtois.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Chirurgie militaire*, by Baron Larrey, IV, 49.

<sup>2</sup> The Emperor had written again to Lacuée in this sense from Ghjat, September 3rd. (*Correspondance*, 19178.)

which we so grievously lacked had not arrived, nor could they come so quickly, since the road beyond the Niemen offered no means of transport. Mojaisk was nothing but a vast hospital. Generals, officers, privates, all arrived there seeking the help which none could give. Detachments were sent out into the neighbouring country to procure food and cattle.

The army continued its movement until the 11th. Marshal Ney, in command of the advance guard, was five leagues from Mojaisk along the road to Moscow, and the King a little further on. This retreat produced only a few prisoners. The Emperor had halted to give the troops some rest, and to carry out the necessary reorganization in case there should be a second battle. On the 13th, when the whole army was again on the move, the Emperor halted all the columns. Our cavalry were so exhausted that they could not push their reconnaissance to any distance, and at the moment we knew so little of the enemy's movements that, doubtful as to the direction taken by Kutusoff, of whom there was no news, the Emperor judged it advisable to pause. He had not received any reports from Prince Poniatowski on our right, and was for a moment uneasy about him, since he felt that the Russians might have taken advantage of our rest to hurl themselves on that side, and threaten our flank and rear in the hope of stopping, or at least delaying, our entry into Moscow until they had received replies from Petersburg. Napoleon still inferred that the enemy desired to propose a settlement whilst they also offered battle.

Officers were sent out one after another in all directions. The King of Naples was ordered to push forward a strong reconnaissance along the Kaluga road. At last the Emperor was reassured, and the army resumed its march. He was delighted to learn that the enemy, encumbered with wounded and baggage, were taking the Moscow road, where, according to various reports, outworks<sup>1</sup> had been thrown up in preparation for a second battle. When evening came, however, the Emperor abandoned his idea on hearing that his advance-

<sup>1</sup> Kutusoff had placed himself at the very gates of Moscow, his right at Fili, on the Moskowa, his left on the heights of Worobiewo.

guard was so near that great city that it was likely that the whole Russian Army would be disbanded and totally disorganized. Nevertheless, he could not explain this movement of the whole army upon Moscow, as it did not offer battle.

On the 12th, headquarters were moved to Zarewo.<sup>1</sup> On the 13th they were at the fine manor-house of Wezianino, which the King of Naples had occupied on the previous day with the advance-guard.<sup>2</sup> The Prince of Neuchâtel told me that the Emperor was amazed at the King of Naples receiving no proposal from the enemy, who had done nothing to put themselves in an attitude of defence notwithstanding their reinforcement by the militia and recruits. From that he inferred, and he repeated it more than once, that the Russian Army had lost far more heavily at the Moskowa than had been supposed, and that it would be in no position to continue the campaign this year. Since the battle the Emperor had spoken to scarcely one of his entourage; he seemed to be in continual anxiety.

At ten o'clock on the morning of the 14th, the Emperor was on the last height overlooking Moscow, called Sparrow Hill, when he received a note from the King of Naples informing him that the enemy had evacuated the city and that a Russian staff officer had been sent to him with a flag of truce to ask for a suspension of hostilities while the troops were crossing the city.<sup>3</sup> The Emperor agreed to this, but

<sup>1</sup> Schuermans says at Petelina, near Preobrajenskoie and Tatarski, in a modest country-house.

<sup>2</sup> Near the village of Borowska, between Nikolskoe and Malo-Wiasma. This house belonged to Prince Galitzin and was situated at the side of a lake. "It was the first really fine château, with extensive outbuildings, the first real château that we had seen since we entered Russia. The soldiers of the advance-guard had damaged it somewhat, as was their custom; they had cut the upholstery." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 153.) The *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt* says: "The 13th. The Emperor left by carriage at noon. He arrived at half-past one at Malo-Wiasma."

<sup>3</sup> "We counted on resistance; instead of that, at four kilometres from Moscow a flag of truce came to command the wounded to

ordered the King to follow the Russians step by step, to press them as far as possible as soon as they should be outside the barriers. He likewise enjoined him not to enter the city, but to go round it if possible. He instructed the King to send him as soon as he could a deputation of the city authorities, who were to meet him at the city gate. Shortly afterwards he ordered General Durosnel, whom he had appointed governor, to enter the city with as many gendarmes as he could muster to establish order and take possession of the public buildings. He urged him particularly to maintain order, to guard the Kremlin, and to keep him supplied with information. The General was especially enjoined to hasten the deputation of city authorities which the King of Naples was to collect. This, the Emperor said, would give the inhabitants of the town the best possible guarantee for their tranquillity.

Not imagining for a moment that this deputation would fail to appear, or that he would receive no news, which was natural enough considering the distance to be covered, the Emperor reached the barrier of the moat at noon and dismounted. His impatience increased with every moment. Every instant he sent out fresh officers, and continually asked whether the deputation or any notables were coming. At last reports came from the King and General Durosnel. Far from having found any of the civic authorities, they had not discovered so much as a single prominent inhabitant. All had fled. Moscow was a deserted city, where no one could be found but a few wretches of the lowest classes.

the care of the King of Naples, and to ask that there should be no firing on the town, which was full of drunken Russian soldiers." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 154.) See also Dennée, *Itinéraire*, 84. This flag of truce had been sent by Miloradovich, commanding Mutisoff's rear-guard.

*Moscow*

WHILE waiting for information the Emperor had spent his time in reconnoitring, in various directions, the hills which commanded Moscow on that side. When he returned to the gate of the city he ordered me to write to the Arch-Chancellor in Paris and to the Duke of Bassano at Wilna, informing them that we were at Moscow, and dating my letter from that city. He placed pickets to prevent any soldier from entering the place, but there were so many gaps in the walls that this precaution was of little avail. In the town itself a few shots were exchanged with armed peasants, stragglers from the Russian Army and Cossacks who were met with everywhere. The prisoners thus taken were sent to the Duke of Eckmühl's Corps, which had taken up its position before the city. Officers of the King of Naples's staff, and others from general headquarters, sent to gather information, hastened in one after another, confirming the particulars already received.

Step by step the King of Naples followed the retreat of the enemy's rear-guard,<sup>1</sup> and the Russian officer in command could not speak highly enough of his bravery, though he blamed His Majesty's temerity. "Such is our admiration of you," he said, "that our Cossacks have passed word round that no one is to fire a shot at so brave a prince. However, one of these days," he added, "you will meet with misfortune." He bade the King take all advantage of this fine courage. In the exchange of such compliments a certain amount of time was gained, and they were dispensed all the more lavishly as the King seemed to welcome them. Wishing to make some gift to so courteous a foe, His Majesty asked his staff if one of them could not lend him some piece of jewellery. M. Gourgaud,

<sup>1</sup> Murat entered Moscow at midnight, September 14, 1812.

the orderly officer who was attached to him in order to carry out the Emperor's scheme of liaison, offered his repeater, which the King hastened to present to the Cossack officer.<sup>1</sup>

Almost the entire city having been occupied, Count Durosnel and M. Gourgaud, who had joined the King and accompanied him throughout, left him to go to the Palace and the Arsenal, where M. Gourgaud took sixty Cossack prisoners.<sup>2</sup>

As was the case in most of the private palaces, nothing had been disturbed in the Kremlin; even the clocks were still going, as though the rightful owners were in occupation. A few Russian stragglers caused some disorder; men were constantly being caught, but the gendarmes at M. Durosnel's disposal were quite insufficient to cope with them, so he confined his attention to the Kremlin and the Foundling Hospital,

<sup>1</sup> "When they reached the neighbourhood of the Kremlin this handful of men found some Cossacks of the rear-guard on their heels, and with his accustomed temerity the King of Naples engaged them in some sort of skirmish. Eventually a truce was called. The King was pleased when Cossacks of all hues crowded round him to stare at the elegant embroidery of his uniform and the beautiful plumes in his Polish cap. The popularity that he enjoys with this warlike people dates from Tilsit, where he put himself on the footing of a dispenser of gifts, a role which he continues to play. He gave his watch to the Cossack chieftain; he borrowed Gourgaud's watch and all the jewellery and trinkets of his suite to distribute among his barbarian admirers." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 52.) "It happened that the watch was a very fine piece of jewellery that Gourgaud had himself received from an illustrious hand." (Dennière, *Itinéraire*, 87.) Murat's liberality "was not at the expense of the fine fellows in his suite; they subsequently received presents of far greater value than the objects they had lent him." (Baussat, *Mémoires*, II, 115.)

<sup>2</sup> "Gourgaud, the orderly officer, with the intention of obtaining information, took an interpreter and went towards the Palace, at the gates of which large groups of men were to be seen. But this was an unfortunate move, for he had advanced but a few paces when he was greeted by shots from a band of wretched convicts, whose audacity was soon quenched by a couple of guns." (Dennière, *Itinéraire*, 87.)

which he kept intact.<sup>1</sup> He asked the Emperor for more troops, informing him that all the houses were full of stragglers and deserters, and that he could not think of entering the city until a number of the houses had been searched and a proper system of patrols established in every quarter, in view of the great size of the city. The Emperor instructed him to apply to the Duke of Treviso, whose corps was to occupy the town; but the Duke's forces were greatly reduced in strength, and as he did not see the need of scattering his men so soon, and at nightfall withal, he sent only a meagre and insufficient number to Durosnel. As I have already said, the better-to-do inhabitants had fled; all the authorities had left the place, which was entirely deserted. There was no possibility, even, of getting together any kind of administrative service. No one remained but a few *outchitets* (French tutors), a few foreign shopkeepers, the servants in some of the hotels, and for the rest, people of the lowest classes of society.

It would be difficult to describe the impression made on the Emperor by this news. Never have I seen him so deeply impressed. He was already greatly disturbed, and impatient at having had to wait for two hours at the city gate, and this report undoubtedly plunged him into the gravest reflections. His face, normally so impassive, showed instantly and unmistakably the mark of his bitter disappointment.

Count Durosnel, to whom he had given the command of the city, busied himself zealously in re-establishing order. He had kept the Emperor acquainted with all the information that reached him, and this completely confirmed what had already been transmitted to him. M. Rostopchin, the Governor of Moscow, had left the city only at eleven o'clock that same morning, after having dispatched the officials, the administrative effects, and the population. A very small number of householders and some thousand or so of people of

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon "first looked at the great edifice of the Foundling Hospital. When he learned that this establishment was under the particular patronage of the Tsar's mother he gave orders that a guard should be placed there at once to ensure its safety." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 53.)

the lowest classes had stayed behind, only because they did not belong to overlords, and because their position prevented them from knowing where to go. Most of the houses were as deserted as the streets. The Governor had kept from the inhabitants any news of the loss of the battle of the Moskowa, and had even said nothing about the projected evacuation of the town until the last moment. Only a small portion of the archives and valuables could be taken away. Some arms remained in the arsenal, and a few soldiers and militia were hidden in the houses; these men were armed and the militia were little better than savages. Durosnel accordingly urged the Emperor once again not to enter the city yet, especially as the difficulty of making oneself understood and even of finding guides or obtaining intelligent information required considerable time.

All these reports made the Emperor still more anxious. After pacing up and down in front of the gate for some time, he mounted his charger, rejoined the Prince of Eckmühl, who was a short distance away, and we all went with him to the village near the town.<sup>1</sup> The Emperor also reconnoitred the environs to a considerable distance. He enjoined the Prince of Eckmühl to see to it that no prisoner could make his escape. The Prince of Neuchâtel, who was present, observed to me "that the marshal was certain to obey these orders exactly, for he had already anticipated them by giving orders to his men to fire on any of the prisoners handed over to him after the battle in the event of their trying to make their escape."

The Emperor retraced his steps, crossed the suburb,<sup>2</sup> and went as far as the partly demolished bridge; the river was only a couple of feet deep, and we were able to ford it. The Emperor went as far as the street on the opposite bank, then turned on his tracks to hasten the repairs to the bridge, so that the munitions might cross. He questioned some of the inhabitants, who knew nothing of what had happened in the

<sup>1</sup> Davout was entrusted with keeping the Smolensk road.

<sup>2</sup> The suburb of Drogomilow, separated from the city by the river Moskowa. See the plan of Moscow in 1812 in the Marquis de Chambray's *Histoire de l'Expedition de Russie*, III, Atlas.

town, and were even unaware of the Russian retreat until the actual moment of evacuation, on the day of our arrival.

The Emperor stayed near the bridge all night, his headquarters being established in a mean tavern built of wood at the entrance to the suburb.<sup>1</sup> The King of Naples, who was in pursuit of the enemy, sent word to the Emperor that numerous stragglers were being caught, that they all said the army was being disbanded, that the Cossacks openly declared that they would fight no more, and that the army was heading for Kasan. He confirmed what had been learned in the city, that Kutusoff had kept silence as to the loss of the battle and the retreat on Moscow until the previous day, and that the authorities and inhabitants of the city had taken to flight that same evening, and even on the day of our arrival. He told us that the governor, Rostopchin, had not heard of the loss of the battle until forty-eight hours before our entry into Moscow; that up to that moment Marshal Kutusoff had talked of nothing but success, of his skilful manoeuvring and the damage he had done to the French. The King of Naples confidently expected to seize part of the enemy convoys, and felt certain of being able to break up their rear-guard, so completely disheartened did he believe the Russians to be. He repeated these particulars in all his despatches, and likewise insisted on the discontent of the Cossacks, whom he declared to be on the point of quitting the Russian Army.

All these details delighted the Emperor and restored his cheerfulness. He had not received any proposals at the gates of Moscow, but the actual state of the Russian Army, its discouragement, the discontent of the Cossacks, the impression certain to be caused in Petersburg by the news of the

<sup>1</sup> "During the afternoon Napoleon himself passed the barrier, went some yards forward and took up his provisional quarters in a large inn on the right-hand side." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 54.) Bausset (*Mémoires*, II, 115) says: "in a fine wooden house." The *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt* says: "The 14th. The Emperor left by carriage at eight in the morning, mounted *Emir* at seven versts from Moscow, arrived at half-past three at the gates of Moscow: 15 versts. Entered the suburb at five o'clock. Lodged in a little wooden house at the entry of the city."

occupation of the second capital of Russia, all the happenings which Kutusoff had doubtlessly concealed from the Tsar just as he had kept them from the Governor Rostopchin<sup>1</sup>—all these things, said the Emperor, must surely lead to peace proposals. He made no comment on Kutusoff's march on Kasan.

About eleven o'clock in the evening news came that the Bazaar<sup>2</sup> was on fire. The Duke of Treviso and Count Durosnel went to the spot, but in the darkness it was impossible to cope with this conflagration, for there was nothing at hand, and no one knew where to find pumps and hoses. The inhabitants and soldiers pillaged such shops as they had time to enter.

During the night there were two small outbreaks of fire in the suburbs situated at some distance from that where the Emperor was quartered; but they were attributed to carelessness in lighting the camp-fires, and orders were given to redouble vigilance. These accidents having no immediate sequel, little importance was attached to them. The Guard was ordered to furnish sentry-posts for the various points. The Duke of Treviso and M. Durosnel, who were constantly in the saddle, did all they could to ensure the tranquillity of the vast city. Finding himself without sufficient means to maintain order, Durosnel came in person to report to the Emperor in the morning, and suggested that the command of the city should be entrusted to the Duke of Treviso,<sup>3</sup> whose troops were occupying the place and who had at his hand all the means of carrying out the requisite steps. The Emperor approved this proposal, and Count Durosnel himself delivered

<sup>1</sup> On the day after the battle of Moskowa, Kutusoff wrote to Alexander to the effect that if he had left the battlefield it was not because he was defeated, but in order that he might get the start and cover Moscow.

<sup>2</sup> The Bazaar was a great square in the Kisaya-gorod, or Chinese town to the north-west of the Kremlin. It was surrounded by a brick arcade on which opened a number of small shops.

<sup>3</sup> Marshal Mortier commanded the Young Guard, quartered in and around the Kremlin.

to the Duke his orders to make himself responsible for the government of Moscow.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor went to the Kremlin at noon.<sup>2</sup> A gloomy silence reigned throughout the deserted city. During the whole of our long route we did not meet one single person. The army took up its positions round the town, and some corps were billeted in the barracks. At three o'clock the Emperor mounted his horse, made a tour of the Kremlin and the Foundling Hospital, went to see the two principal bridges, and then returned to the Kremlin, where he had installed himself in the apartments of Tsar Alexander.

It was not until then that we learned of Kutusoff's proclamation to his army on the eve of the battle.

Various reports said that Kutusoff and Rostopchin had met to discuss affairs on the day before the evacuation; Rostopchin was said to have proposed the destruction of the city, but Kutusoff had been opposed to this step, and had been so indignant at the suggestion, and at the other measures desired by the Governor that he had gone away in a rage. From other details it seemed that these two personages, who disliked each other, rarely met, that Kutusoff had left Rostopchin as ignorant as he had left the Tsar up to the very last moment, for in Moscow as in Petersburg, a *Te Deum* had been sung for the supposed victory of the Russian arms.<sup>3</sup> We heard that the

<sup>1</sup> The Duke of Treviso was to take over "the senior command of the city" at noon, September 16th. (Berthier to Mortier, September 16th. *Vide* Chuquet, *La Guerre en Russie*, 79.)

<sup>2</sup> September 15th. The *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt* says: "The 15th. Mounted Emir at six in the morning to go to the Kremlin Palace." Dennière (*Itinéraire*, 90) says eight o'clock. Schuermann (*Itinéraire générale de Napoléon I*, Paris, 1908, 308) follows Rembovski and Domergue in saying seven o'clock. The time of noon given by Caulaincourt in the *Mémoires* is further contradicted by Gourgaud, who says six o'clock. (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 273.)

<sup>3</sup> On September 13th Kutusoff had summoned a council of war, in the course of which it had been decided to abandon Moscow; but Rostopchin does not seem to have been invited to this council.

first convoy of wounded arrived on the 12th; that on the 13th rumours of a defeat began to spread, though they were discounted; that even on that day and the following day some of the city militia were sent out to join the main army; in short, even persons in authority were totally in the dark as to what had happened until the day before our entry. The Emperor was also given full particulars of a fire balloon, upon which an Englishman or a Dutchman named Smidt had been working in secret for some time. This balloon, we were told, was to destroy the French army, overwhelming it with confusion and destruction.<sup>1</sup> This same man had also manufactured numerous fuses and inflammable materials, and the systematic manufacture of most of these incendiary objects, found in the various houses in preparation for setting light to them, was notable.

Much of the information we received was contradictory, and proved that those who had left the city had not confided their intentions to those who remained, even at the very last. An aged French actress repeated so widely a conversation she

<sup>1</sup> "Through information obtained from Russian prisoners, and from the reports of foreigners settled in Moscow we know that firebrands and incendiary preparations had been manufactured some time previously by a chemist who was said to be a German but who, in the end, was found to be actually an Englishman. This person, denounced by a number of workmen, had for long been concealed in the Woronozowo, a short distance from Moscow, under the protection of Rostopchin, the Governor. To reassure public opinion it was given out officially that an enormous balloon was being made, that could carry fifty persons, and would be loaded with combustible materials destined to be discharged on Napoleon's tent; and the good folks of Moscow believed it." (Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 116.) "Some six weeks earlier a sort of arsenal had been established in Prince Repnin's country-house, about six versts from the city, where fireworks were being made. . . . A bulletin issued by the Governor-General had previously announced that a great balloon was being prepared by means of which the entire enemy army was to be infallibly destroyed." (*Moscou pendant l'incendie. Journal de curé de Saint-Louis des Français* (Surugue, published by the Abbé Rebours, 1891.) Cf. A. de B—ch (Beauchamp), *Histoire de la destruction de Moscou*, Paris, 49.

was supposed to have had with a certain General Borozdine,<sup>1</sup> that the Emperor expressed a wish to see her. According to the General or to this actress, the disaffection towards the Tsar and the popular dislike of the war for Poland had reached such extreme lengths that the Russian nobility, threatened with the loss of their property and the greater part of their fortune, were anxious for peace at any price and would force the Emperor Alexander to come to terms. Kutusoff had deceived the Court at Petersburg even as he had deceived the public and the Governor of Moscow. Everyone imagined that he had been victorious. The precipitate evacuation of the city would ruin the Russian nobility and force the government to sue for peace. The nobles were enraged with Kutusoff and Rostopchin for having lulled them into a false sense of security.

At eight o'clock in the evening flames broke out in one of the suburbs. Assistance was sent, without more attention being paid to the matter, for it was still attributed to the carelessness of the troops.

The Emperor retired early; everyone was fatigued and as anxious to rest as he was. At half-past ten my valet, an energetic fellow who had been in my service during my embassy to Petersburg, woke me up with the news that for three-quarters of an hour the city had been in flames. I had only to open my eyes to realize that this was so, for the fire was spreading with such fierceness that it was light enough to read in the middle of my room. I sprang from bed and sent to wake the Grand Marshal (Duroc) while I dressed. As the fire was spreading in the quarters farthest away from the Kremlin, we decided to send word to the Governor of the city, to put the Guard under arms, and to let the Emperor sleep a little longer, as he had been extremely tired during the past few days. I mounted my horse hurriedly to go and see what was happening and gather what assistance I could muster,

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Milhailovitch Borozdine, born in 1777, served in the Horse Guards, of which he became Colonel. He was aide-de-camp to the Tsar (1805), and in 1825 commanded the 4th Reserve Corps. He was promoted General of Cavalry; he died at St. Petersburg, November 14, 1830.

and to make sure that the men connected with my own department, scattered throughout the city as they were, were running no hazards. A stiff wind was blowing from the north, from the direction of the two points of conflagration that we could see, and was driving the flames towards the centre, which made the blaze extraordinarily powerful. About half-past twelve<sup>1</sup> a third fire broke out a little to the west, and shortly afterwards a fourth, in another quarter, in each case in the direction of the wind, which had veered slightly towards the west. About four o'clock in the morning the conflagration was so widespread that we judged it necessary to wake the Emperor, who at once sent more officers to find out what was actually happening and discover whence these fires could be starting.

The troops were under arms; the few remaining inhabitants were flying from their houses and gathering in the churches; there was nothing to be heard but lamentation. Search had been made for the fire-engines since the previous day, but some of them had been taken away and the rest put out of action. From different houses officers and soldiers brought *boutechnicks* (street constables) and *moujiks* (peasants) who had been taken in the act of firing inflammable material into houses for the purpose of burning them down. The Poles reported that they had already caught some incendiaries and shot them, and they added, moreover, that from these men and from other inhabitants they had extracted the information that orders had been given by the governor of the city and the police that the whole city should be burned during the night. It was impossible to believe these details; the arrested men were put under guard, and fresh search and increased watchfulness were instituted; pickets had already been sent to those quarters of the town which were not already in flames; and the further particulars which continued to arrive confirmed our gravest suspicions.

The Emperor was deeply concerned. At first he attributed the fire to disorders among the troops and the state in which the inhabitants had abandoned their dwellings. He could

<sup>1</sup> September 16th.

not persuade himself, as he said at Ghjat, that the Russians would deliberately burn their houses to prevent our sleeping in them. At the same time he made serious reflections on the possible consequences of these events for the army with regard to the resources of which they would deprive us. He could not believe that it was the result of a firm resolution and a great voluntary sacrifice. But the successive reports left no further doubt, and he renewed his orders to take every possible measure to stop the disaster and discover those who were carrying out these cruel measures.

Towards half-past nine he left the courtyard of the Kremlin on foot, just when two more incendiaries caught in the act were being brought in. They were in police uniform. Interrogated in the presence of the Emperor they repeated their declarations: that they had received the order from their commanding officer to burn everything, that houses had been designated for this end, that in the different quarters everything had been prepared for burning in accordance with orders from the Governor Rostopchin, as they had heard. The police officers had spread their men in small detachments in various quarters, and the order to put their instructions into action had been given in the evening of the previous day and confirmed by one of their officers on the following morning. They were reluctant to give the name of this officer, but at last one of them ended by declaring that the man concerned was a minor non-commissioned officer. They could not, or would not, indicate where he was at the moment, nor where he was to be found. Their replies were translated to the Emperor in the presence of his suite. Many other depositions confirmed unmistakably what they said. All the incendiaries were kept under observation, some were brought to judgment and eight or ten executed.

The conflagration invariably spread from the extremities of the districts where it originated. It had already reached the houses around the Kremlin. The wind, which had veered slightly to the west, fanned the flames to a terrifying extent and carried enormous sparks to a distance, where they fell like a fiery deluge hundreds of yards away, setting fire to more

houses and preventing the most intrepid from remaining in the neighbourhood. The air was so hot, and the pinewood sparks were so numerous, that the beams supporting the iron plates which formed the roof of the arsenal all caught fire. The roof of the Kremlin kitchen was only saved by the men placed there with brooms and buckets to gather up the glowing fragments and moisten the beams.<sup>1</sup> Only by super-human efforts was the fire in the Arsenal<sup>2</sup> extinguished. The Emperor was there himself; his presence inspired the Guard<sup>3</sup> to every exertion.

I hastened to the Court stables, where some of the Emperor's horses were stabled and the coronation coaches of the Tsar were kept. The utmost zeal, and, I may add, the greatest courage on the part of the coachmen and grooms, were necessary to save the place; they clambered on to the roof, and knocked off the fallen cinders, whilst others worked two fire-engines which I had had put in order during the night, as they had been totally dismantled. I may say without exaggeration that we were working beneath a vault of fire. With these men's help I was able to save the beautiful Galitzin Palace and

<sup>1</sup> Only a divine inspiration could save us. This it was which led a company of Grenadiers posted in this spot (the Lubianka) to seize buckets and pour water on the roofs of such houses as were most exposed to danger; and this with such promptness that they averted the attacks of the flames. This proved the salvation of the entire district, which was the only one left intact." (Letter from the Abbé Surugue, curé de Saint-Louis at Moscow, quoted by Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 87.)

<sup>2</sup> "By noon the fire had enveloped the Palace stables and one tower contiguous to the Arsenal; sparks even fell in the courtyard of the Arsenal, on a pile of tow that had been used in the Russian ammunition wagons. The wagons of our own artillery were standing there. The danger was immense, and the Emperor was informed. He went to the spot." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 91.)

<sup>3</sup> "The gunners and soldiers of the Guard, apprehensive at seeing Napoleon expose himself to such great danger, only added to it by their eagerness; General Lariboisière begged the Emperor to go away, pointing out to him that his presence was making the gunners lose their heads." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 91.)

the two adjoining houses, which were already in flames. The Emperor's men were ably assisted by Prince Galitzin's servants, who displayed the utmost devotion to their master. Everyone did his best to further the measures we took to check this devouring torrent of flame, but the air was charged with fire; we breathed nothing but smoke, and the stoutest lungs felt the strain after a time. The bridge to the south of the Kremlin was so heated by the fire and the sparks falling on it that it kept bursting into flames, although the Guard, and the Sappers in particular, made it a point of honour to preserve it. I stayed with some generals of the Guard and aides-de-camp of the Emperor, and we were forced to lend a hand and stay in the midst of this deluge of fire in order to spur on these half-roasted men. It was impossible to stay more than a moment in one spot; the fur on the Grenadiers' caps was singed.

The fire made such progress that the whole of the northern and the greater part of the western quarter, by which we had entered, were burned, together with the splendid playhouse and all the larger buildings. One breathed in a sea of fire, and the westerly wind continued to blow. The flames spread continuously; it was impossible to predict where or when they would stop, as there was no means of staying them. The conflagration passed beyond the Kremlin; it seemed that the river would surely save all the district lying to the east.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, while the fire was still raging, the Emperor began to think that this great catastrophe might be connected with some movements of the enemy,<sup>1</sup> though the frequent reports from the King of Naples assured His Majesty that the Russians were pushing forward their retreat along the Kasan road. Napoleon therefore gave orders to leave the city, and forbade anything to be left within its walls. Headquarters were established at the Petrowskoie Palace, on the Petersburg road, a country mansion where the

<sup>1</sup> According to Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 278), Napoleon's decision was taken after Berthier had made this remark: "Sire, if the enemy attacks the army corps outside Moscow, Your Majesty has no means of communicating with them."

Tsars were accustomed to take up residence before making their solemn entry into Moscow for their coronation. It was impossible to proceed thither by the direct road on account of the fire and the wind; one had to cross the western part of the town as best one could, through ruins, cinders, flames even, if one wanted to reach the outskirts.<sup>1</sup> Night had already fallen when we got there, and we spent the following day in the Palace.

Meanwhile the fire continued with renewed violence, but a part of the quarter between the Kremlin and Petrowskoic, where headquarters and the Guard were billeted, was saved. The Emperor was deep in thought, he spoke to no one, and only went out for half an hour to inspect the interior and exterior of the mansion<sup>2</sup>. During his stay at Petrowskoie he

<sup>1</sup> Denniéé (*Itinéraire*, 95) thus describes the Emperor's departure: "The Emperor gave orders for the departure. He slowly came down the stairs of the tower of Ivan (whence he had watched the fire) followed by the Prince of Neuchâtel and other of his officers. Leaning on the arm of the Duke of Vicenza, he crossed a little wooden bridge which led to the Quay of the Moskowa. There he found his horses." Ségur (*Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 52) says that: "After some gropings a small gate was found which opened on to the Moskowa" and he continues with a dramatic recital of the dangers to which Napoleon was exposed on the way. Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 278) contradicts Ségur's account and says that: "The Emperor left by one of the great doors of the Kremlin, accompanied by his officers, in the same manner as he had arrived, and did not go out across the rocks. He descended on to the Moskowa quay, where he mounted his horse. One of the policemen of Moscow walked in front of him, serving as guide. For some time they followed the river and entered the districts where the wooden buildings had been completely destroyed." According to the *Itinéraire des Archives de Caulaincourt*: "The 16th September. At half-past five in the evening the Emperor left the palace of the Kremlin on foot by the gate on the river-side, mounted *Tauris* at the stone bridge, took the road for Mojaisk in the midst of the fire, re-crossed the river at a league from the city in order to reach the Palace of Petrowskoie. Arrived at half-past seven. To bed."

<sup>2</sup> "Very fine, surrounded by high brick walls flanked by towers in the Greek style, it has truly a very romantic appearance." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 155.)

received no one but the Prince of Neuchâtel, who profited by the occasion, and took advantage of the reflections induced by the fire, to urge His Majesty not to undertake a long sojourn at Moscow. At sight of this cruel spectacle who would not have felt forebodings of further disaster?

The existence of inflammable fuses, all made in the same fashion and placed in different public and private buildings, is a fact of which I, as well as many others, had personal evidence. I have seen these fuses on the spot, and several were taken to the Emperor. They were also found in the quarter by which he entered the city, and even in the Imperial bedroom in the Kremlin. M. Durosnel, the Duke of Treviso, Count Dumas, and many others observed them on their entrance, but paid no further attention, for they were far from thinking that the Governor and the Government had any ambition, as the Emperor said, to go down to posterity as a modern Erostratus.

The examination of the police rank and file, and the admissions of the police-officer who was caught on the day we entered the city, all proved that the fire had been prepared, ordered, and executed by order of Count Rostopchin. This police-officer, whom M. Lelorgne<sup>1</sup> discovered in the city while looking for the deputation always expected by His Majesty, was a simpleton who knew all that was afoot and was very candid in all his avowals, as was proved by many reports. He supplied details as to the preparations of this fire which left no further doubt as to the Governor's orders, and in time shed the fullest light on the matter.

Of the various incendiaries who were brought to judgment some were executed and others left in prison, hapless victims of their obedience to their superiors and the orders of a

<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth-Louis François Lelorgne, Baron d'Ideville, born in Paris, October 4, 1780; died Paris, May 30, 1852. Auditor of the Council of State, attached to the office of foreign relations and specially charged with foreign statistics, he had been appointed Secretary-Interpreter attached to the person of the Emperor, July 31, 1812. He had previously lived in Moscow and knew that city intimately. He was the father of Henry d'Ideville.

madman, as the Emperor said.<sup>1</sup> The police-officer who at first was compelled to furnish M. Lelorgne with full information, became so terrified that he appeared to be slightly deranged. Such at least was the impression left by his statements. His revelations seemed to be the delusions of a demented man, and at the time no heed was paid to them. This unfortunate fellow kicked his heels for some time in the custody of the guard, where he was left when no longer needed. After the outbreak of the fire his first statements were recalled. It was also remembered that when he had seen the first small fire break out, which was attributed to some camp-fires having been lit too near the wooden houses of the quarter, he had announced that before long there would be many other outbreaks; and when the main conflagration started he exclaimed that the whole city would be burned, orders having been issued to that effect. In fact, all that we had imputed to a disordered mind actually came to pass, so he was questioned anew.

To what he had already told us he now added, in confirmation of what several other incendiaries had informed us, that on the day before Governor Rostopchin's departure, several police officers were summoned to a particular locality which he designated (other depositions confirmed this), where they received orders to prepare for burning the city; that they had been instructed to be ready to carry out this order as soon as they had the word; and that subsequently the chiefs of police appointed on every occasion a new rendezvous where their subordinates were to make their reports. On the day when their instructions were to be carried into effect, each senior officer received the order at a time which he indicated, and transmitted it to his subordinates in his district, for them to carry out. The fire-engines had been taken away by the firemen, and those that they had not been able to harness up had been deliberately put out of action and removed.

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon decreed the creation of military commissions formed by the corps quartered in each district to judge summarily, shoot or hang the incendiaries caught red-handed.

Before entering Moscow, the Emperor had intended not to take up his residence in the city. The fire, and the consequent destruction of part of the supplies, seemed likely to make him follow this first impulse. The natural conclusion that the Russians would not have sacrificed their capital if they had been at all inclined to sue for peace was likewise calculated to clear the situation. These reflections, combined with many other points brought to his attention by the few persons to whom he spoke of affairs, and certainly shared by him, seemed to confirm his intentions for a time during our stay at Petrowskoie, and even during the first moments of his return to the Kremlin. In fact everything was ready for withdrawal, and for a time the Prince of Neuchâtel imagined that this would be carried out. But the successive reports from the King of Naples as to the discouragement of the Russian Army, and despatches in which he drew pictures of the results which he hoped and promised from this cause, soon made the Emperor modify these arrangements. The King always saw the Russian Army in flight along the Kasan road, the men deserting, disbanding in troops, the Cossacks ready to leave the army, some even disposed to make common cause with the victorious French.

The Cossack chieftains overwhelmed the King of Naples with continual flattery, and he never ceased to give them tokens of his munificence. The vanguard had no need to fight; the Cossack officers took instructions from the King as to the direction in which he wished to march, and where he desired to establish his headquarters. From the moment his outposts arrived they were practically taken care of, to see that nothing went amiss. No beguilements were neglected to gratify the King, and these marks of deference delighted him greatly. This made the Emperor place less faith in his despatches; the Cossack cajoleries were suspect to his eyes. He saw that the King was being duped, and told him to distrust Kutusoff's pretended march on Kasan. The Emperor could not fathom this movement of the enemy. This affectation of regard for the King, and exaggerated accounts of the enemy's discouragement and the discontent of the Cossacks, appeared

to him as proofs of underhand work. Although such circumstances would normally have delighted him, he saw them only as blinds to deceive the King as to what was really afoot, or baits to draw him into some trap.

On September 18th the Emperor returned to the Kremlin.<sup>1</sup> His departure from Moscow had been the signal for an outbreak of grave disorder. Such houses as had been saved from the fire were pillaged; such unfortunate inhabitants as had remained were ill-treated. Shops and cellars were forced open, and thence followed the train of excess and crime inevitably resulting from the drunkenness of soldiers heedless of the voice of their superiors. The city rabble, taking advantage of this disorder, shared in the pillage and led the troops to the cellars and vaults and anywhere else that they thought might have been used to conceal property, in the hope of sharing the pillage. Those army corps not actually in the city sent in detachments to secure their portion of the victuals and booty. The result of this systematic search can be guessed. All kinds of supplies and plenty of wine and brandy were found. The grain and fodder warehouses along the quays had escaped the fire, and the army horses had been so short of provender between Smolensk and Ghjat, and from the battle until we reached Moscow, that everyone hastened to forage for them, and during the two days of the 15th and 16th got enough hay to last several months. Part of these provisions were consumed in the houses as they were found, and to the surplus we owed the abundance with which we lived until our

<sup>1</sup> The Emperor left Petrowskoie on September 18th, according to the *Itinéraires des Archives de Caulaincourt*: "The 17th. The Emperor did not ride to-day. The 18th. The Emperor at 9 a.m. mounted *Moscoue*, crossed the town, came to the Kremlin, mounted *Varsovie*, rode about that portion of the city to the right of the theatre, came to the stone bridge, went out by the right of Kolonna, followed the outside moat of the city, passed before the two large military hospitals, the yellow palace. Returned to the Kremlin at four o'clock in the afternoon." The Marquis de Chambray (*Histoire de l'Expédition de Russie*, II, 191) is clearly mistaken when he fixes September 20th as the date of the Emperor's return to Moscow.

departure from the city,<sup>1</sup> and even enough to keep the men and horses during part of the retreat.

As soon as he returned to Moscow the Emperor began to busy himself with clearing the French Army in the eyes of Petersburg from the odium of having caused the fire, which they had done their utmost to extinguish and from which self-interest alone was sufficient to exonerate them. He instructed M. Lelorgne to find some Russian to whom all the details of the affair could be confided and who would repeat what he was told in the proper quarters. M. Toutolmine,<sup>2</sup> head of the Foundling Hospital, had stayed courageously, like a good father, at the head of this establishment, although most of the foundlings had been evacuated;<sup>3</sup> and he seemed all the more suitable to undertake the Emperor's charge in that his position as head of one of the Dowager Empress's institutions would enhance the authority of his report in the eyes of the upper and lower classes in Petersburg. He appeared before Napoleon, and M. Lelorgne undertook the duties of interpreter. The Russian was profuse in his gratitude for the help and protection accorded to his establishment. The Emperor assured him that he had undertaken this war from purely political motives and from no spirit of animosity; that peace was his primary aim as he had explained on more than one occasion: that he had been forced to come to Moscow in spite of himself; that he had done everything at Moscow, as elsewhere, to maintain order, and had done his best to extinguish the conflagration started by the Russians themselves.

In his letter to Petersburg, M. Toutolmine<sup>4</sup> praised the

<sup>1</sup> Larrey estimates that the provisions found in Moscow were sufficient to feed the whole army for six months. (*Chirurgie militaire*, IV.)

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Akinfievitch Toutolmine, born December 27, 1752, died December 17, 1815, and buried at Moscow in the Donski Monastery. He was a councillor of state and held the rank of Major-General.

<sup>3</sup> All the children over twelve had been evacuated to Kasan. Cf. Grand Duke Nicolas Mikhailovitch, *Portraits Russes*, IV, 139.

<sup>4</sup> Caulaincourt means to say: "In the letter to the Tsar's mother that he wrote, after this conversation."

measures taken by the Emperor and his care for the city, as also M. Lelorgne's unremitting attention and thoughtfulness for the Russians, which had not been relaxed for one moment, as I can myself bear witness. As soon as M. Toutolmine's letters were ready he was given a passport and every facility for enabling one of his employees to bear them to Petersburg.

With the exception of the King of Naples's corps, the entire army was in the town, or quartered close at hand. Inhabitants who had suffered from the fire had found refuge in churches, cemeteries, or wherever they felt secure from the vexation of the troops. The churches, being for the most part on public squares and completely detached buildings, had to a great extent escaped the ravages of the flames. Many of these unfortunate refugees had made their way to Petrowskoie, where everything possible was done for them. I housed some two dozen of them in the Galitzin mansion, and among the number was M. Zagriaski,<sup>1</sup> Master of the Horse to the Tsar, who had hoped, by remaining in Moscow, to save his house, the care of his whole life. There was also a Major-General, German by birth, who had gone into retirement in Moscow after long service with the Empress Catherine. These unhappy men had lost everything; nothing remained to them but the greatcoats which they wore.

Our return to Moscow was no less gloomy than our departure. I cannot relate all that I had suffered since the death of my brother. The sight of these recent events broke me down completely; the horror of all that was going on around us added to my grief at his loss. Although one cannot feel one's personal troubles exclusively in the midst of so many public disasters, one is none the less grieved by them. I was overwhelmed. Happy are they who never saw that dire spectacle, that picture of destruction!

A great portion of the city was reduced to ashes; the northern district, nearest the Kremlin, had been saved by the wind shifting to the west; some isolated districts to windward had

<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Alexandrovitch Zagriaski (1743-1821), entered the service in 1754 in the Ismailowski regiment. He was chamberlain to Paul I, grand cup-bearer and gentleman of the chamber.

not suffered at all. The splendid mansions all round the city had escaped the plans for their destruction; only that of M. Rostopchin, the Governor, had been burned to the ground by its proprietor, who had posted up a notice of his intention, doubtless very patriotic in his own eyes, on the signpost that indicated the road from his lands to Worozowo, a short distance from Moscow. This notice was brought to the Emperor, who turned the whole thing to ridicule. He talked a lot about it and sent it to Paris where it doubtlessly produced, as it had in the army, an impression quite contrary to what he expected. It had a profound effect on every thinking man, and this sacrifice of his own house, irrespective of what others did, gained the Governor more admirers than critics. This is how the notice was worded: "For eight years I have improved this land, and I have lived happily here in the bosom of my family. To the number of one thousand seven hundred and twenty the dwellers on my estate are leaving it at your approach, while, for my part, I am setting fire to my mansion rather than let it be sullied by your presence. Frenchmen, in Moscow I have abandoned to you my two residences, with furniture worth half a million roubles! Here you will find only ashes!"

Some days after the return to Moscow, the Emperor announced openly that he had resolved to take up his winter quarters at Moscow, which, even in its present state, would furnish him with better quarters and more supplies than any other place. He therefore put the Kremlin and the various monasteries and convents round the city into a state of defence, and ordered various reconnaissances in the neighbourhood so as to establish a defensive system for the winter.

The Emperor took many other measures of anticipation. He announced that he was ordering fresh levies of men in France and Poland; that he was preparing the organization of the Polish Cossacks, "for which orders have already been issued," he said. Reserves had instructions to join us, and all the reinforcing detachments, which had been echeloned in their advance, were detailed to safeguard our rear, protect convoys, and keep open communications. The post-houses

were fortified; the courier service which I had organized at the start of the campaign was given special attention. The trunk bearing despatches for the Emperor and his headquarters arrived regularly every day from Paris in fifteen—often fourteen—days. This service was carried out by postillions relayed from post to post between Paris and Erfurt; from Erfurt to Poland by couriers stationed in brigades of four at every thirty leagues; in part of Poland by relays of postillions, across the frontier and through Russia by French postillions whom Count Lavalette<sup>1</sup> had selected himself, mounted on the best post-horses, and placed at my service. There were four to every relay, and each relay from five to seven leagues. The punctuality with which this service was carried out was truly astonishing.<sup>2</sup>

The Emperor was always impatient for the arrival of his courier; he noticed the delay of a few hours, and even grew anxious, though this service had never suffered any breakdown. The Paris portfolio, the packets from Warsaw and Wilna, were

<sup>1</sup> Lavalette was Director-General of the Posts of the Empire.

<sup>2</sup> The *Archives* of Caulaincourt include some reports from Margarita, Director of Posts to the Emperor. One sees, for example, that the courier who left Paris at 8.15 on the morning of September 28, 1812, arrived at Moscow at one o'clock in the morning of October 14th, having taken fifteen days, sixteen hours, and forty-five minutes on the journey. He had been kept three hours and three-quarters at Wilna while waiting for the despatches of Bassano. The courier who left Paris at 9.5 on the morning of September 29th reached Moscow at 9.25 on the evening of October 15, having taken sixteen days twelve hours and twenty minutes, with a delay of two hours and ten minutes at Wilna. The courier who left Paris, September 30th, at 8.45 a.m., arrived at Moscow at 4.45 on the morning of October 16th, after fifteen days and twenty hours on the way and a delay of two hours and fifty minutes at Wilna. The courier who left Paris at 8.50 in the morning of October 1st arrived at 5.40 in the morning of October 17th, after fifteen days twenty-one hours and fifty minutes, with a delay of an hour at Wilna. Finally, the courier who started from Paris at 8.35 on the morning of October 2nd arrived in Moscow at 7.35 in the evening of October 17th, having taken fifteen days and eleven hours, with a delay of three and a half hours at Wilna.

the thermometer of the Emperor's good or bad humour. It was the same with all of us, for everyone's happiness depended on the news from France. Small consignments of wine and other objects arrived. Officers, surgeons and administrative officials also came to join the army. The reports from officers in command of the principal points in our lines of communication were reassuring. It was as easy to travel from Paris to Moscow as from Paris to Marseilles. Yet everyone was loath to resign himself to passing the winter so far from France, whither all eyes and thoughts continually turned. We had been spoiled by the Emperor's previous campaigns, when peace had always been bought with a few months' toil. Except in the Prussian and Polish campaigns, winters had always been spent in France, and recollections of Osterode and Guttstadt, of the snows of Pultusk and Fratnitz,<sup>1</sup> brought only sombre reflections.

Some, myself among the first, doubted whether the Emperor really had the intention of passing the winter at Moscow. The immense distance between ourselves and Poland would give the enemy too many opportunities of harassing us; and there seemed a thousand other considerations against the execution of this project. On the other hand, the Emperor busied himself with so many details of the future, discussed it in such positive terms, and seemed to regard it as essential to the success of his enterprise, if peace were not secured before the winter, that the most incredulous among us ended by believing that he intended to carry out his plans. At that time even the Grand Marshal and the Prince of Neuchâtel seemed convinced that we should remain in Moscow. Everyone laid plans accordingly, and collected furniture and all sorts of things abandoned in the city which might be useful for completing domestic arrangements. Wood and forage were collected; in short, everyone acted as though he would certainly have to pass in Moscow the eight months that must elapse before spring.

For my part, I must confess that in the Emperor's affectation in talking of this plan, as well as in the measures he took for

<sup>1</sup> Campaign of 1806-7.

carrying it out, I saw only the desire to give a turn to public opinion, to ensure the collection of provisions, and, above all, to support the overtures he had made. Nobody knew of these overtures. M. Toutolmine had kept the secret as faithfully as M. Lelorgne, who had been entrusted with a second attempt. But the Emperor let fall a few words to the Prince of Neu-châtel as to the nature of his overtures.

The Emperor felt certain (as he later admitted) that his advances, made partly to emphasize that the French had no hand in the burning of Moscow and had done all in their power to check its ravages, and partly to prove his readiness to enter into an agreement, would elicit a reply and even proposals for peace. The burning of Moscow had roused serious reflections in his mind, though he did his utmost to banish from his thoughts the implied consequences of such action on the part of the Russians, and the scant hope that the Russian Government was disposed to make peace. He was always eager to believe in his good star, and that Russia, wearied of war, would seize any occasion to bring the struggle to an end. He imagined that the sole difficulty lay in the method of opening the matter, for Russia credited him with vast schemes; but he had taken the initiative by proving to the Tsar Alexander that he was open to listen to conditions and this would inevitably lead to proposals from their side. I think, indeed, that the Emperor Napoleon would have been very amenable in the matter of conditions at that moment, for peace was the sole means of withdrawal from this quandary. He made his advances as if actuated by generosity, under the impression that he was outwitting Petersburg as regards his true motives. He tried to make us believe that the fear of his proving too exacting prevented proposals reaching him. In this way he hoped to extricate himself from the embarrassing situation in which he had placed himself. It was in this hope of an imminent peace that he prolonged his unfortunate sojourn at Moscow.

The splendid weather and the mild temperature that continued so late that year helped to mislead him. Perhaps it had also been his intention to make his winter quarters in Russia

before his rear should be threatened and attacked. In that case, he said "Moscow was, by its name, a political position; by the number and nature of its still extant buildings and resources, it was a military position preferable to any other, if he remained in Russia."

In his intimate circle the Emperor conversed, acted and issued orders all on the presumption that he was going to stay in Moscow, so that even those most closely in his confidence entertained no doubt on the matter for some time.

Such was our situation ten or twelve days after our arrival, and everybody believed that we were staying in Moscow, up to the moment when our artillery convoys were attacked<sup>1</sup> and our couriers delayed. One of the latter was captured, as well as two boxes of army letters on their way back to France.

Seeing the season so advanced without any preparation having been made for our departure, I myself ended by doubting in the voluntary evacuation of Moscow. To me it seemed impossible that the Emperor should even think of a retreat when the frost set in, especially as no measures had been taken to protect the men nor any steps taken to enable the horses to cross the ice, although some idea of what a Russian winter meant could have been gleaned from what had happened at Osterode and in Poland. The memory of this, besides, furnished an idea of the Emperor's tenacity of purpose.

Every day some discovery was made of shops and cellars where stuffs, cloths and furs were concealed, and everyone purchased what he thought necessary for the winter. This precaution proved to be the salvation of those who took it.

I paid the wages of all those employed in my department and issued orders that all the greatcoats should be lined with

<sup>1</sup> On September 22nd, at about 20 kilometres from Moscow, the Cossacks surprised a convoy of artillery wagons returning from Smolensk and escorted by two squadrons, whom they made prisoners. On the 25th the Cossacks took eighty dragoons of the Guard near Malo-Wiasma, at the home of Prince Galitzin.

fur, or at least given a fur collar sewn on where a larger skin could not be procured. I also gave orders that fur hats and gloves should be made. It was to this foresight at a time when furs were easily obtainable, as well as to the care and energy of M. Gy,<sup>1</sup> who was in charge of the personnel and, having been with me in Petersburg, was acquainted with the Russian climate, that I owed the possibility of being able to ensure the health of those brave and worthy servants of the Emperor who were under my orders.

On my arrival I organized a number of workshops for augmenting the means of transport of biscuits and fodder. I caused the smiths to forge a number of horseshoes suitable for travelling on ice; in a word, I took every possible measure against such difficulties as might be encountered in winter operations, and to these steps I had the satisfaction of attributing my success in transporting my sick and conveying my vehicles as far as Wilna.

As soon as he returned to Moscow the Emperor gave orders for parades to be held in the court of the Kremlin. A cook-house service had been organized and great activity expended on building ovens. The defensive works were pushed forward vigorously, and a portion of the Prince of Eckmühl's corps was quarters in the city. The immense fields of vegetables, especially cabbages, surrounding the town were carefully cut; numerous stacks of hay were also brought into the city, and the potato fields within a radius of two or three leagues were cleared. The transport wagons were in constant use. For the Emperor's household I organized a body of men to secure the flour from a mill, as wheat was beginning to be scarce. I had a large supply of biscuits baked, and a considerable number of sledges constructed. In short, I had everything in readiness for either a prolonged sojourn in the city or an immediate departure. Detachments of men beat up the country to collect cattle, which were becoming scarce. A regular distribution of rations had to be organized. The hospitals were well organized; I established one for the household in a wing of the Kremlin. The men were well looked

<sup>1</sup> First Groom of the Household.

after, thanks to MM. Lerminier,<sup>1</sup> Joannes,<sup>2</sup> and Ribes,<sup>3</sup> whose zeal and rare devotion saved the lives of a great number of unfortunate fellows who had been attacked by nervous fevers and were already enfeebled by excessive fatigue.

The overtures for peace which M. Toutolmine had carried as an intermediary to Petersburg were considered there as proof of the state of embarrassment in which they already suspected we were. While they were being discussed the Emperor busied himself, as I have said, with all his wonted activity, in reorganizing the various corps, establishing hospitals, and making sure of provisions for the winter. Night and day were one to him. Paris and France were the object of all his thoughts, and couriers were constantly setting off with decrees and decisions dated from Moscow.

The war in Spain once again occupied his attention.<sup>4</sup> All

<sup>1</sup> Théodoric Nilamond Lerminier, from 1808 physician to the Emperor, and to the Hôtel-Dieu, Paris, then to the Charité. Born at Abbeville, June 27, 1770; died in June, 1836.

<sup>2</sup> There does not seem to have been any doctor of this name at imperial headquarters. There was a Doctor Joanneau attached to the 1st Division of the Guard (Delaborde), but we think that Caulaincourt is more probably speaking of Dr. Jouan, assistant surgeon to the Emperor, who accompanied Napoleon into Russia. Guillaume Jouan, born September 21, 1767, at Nuits (Côte d'Or), son of Jean and Guillemette Roy, surgeon of the third class at the ambulance at Meaux from September 15 to December 17, 1792; third-class surgeon in the military hospital of the Invalides, October 12, 1794; seconded from this hospital for employment in the ambulance of Emperor's household in the campaigns from the year 1803 to 1807, and from 1812 to 1813, retired by royal decree June 10, 1835. (*Archives administratives de la Guerre: classement général.*)

<sup>3</sup> François Ribes, born September 4, 1765, at Bagnères (Hautes Pyrénées), assistant surgeon at the Hôtel des Invalides, September 24, 1792; surgeon-major to the Army of the Pyrénées, March 28, 1794; surgeon of the third class to the Hôtel des Invalides, May 4, 1795; surgeon of the second class, February 4, 1804, to the Grand Army, June 15, 1812; to the Hôtel des Invalides, December 15, 1813; physician to the Invalides, August 10, 1828; Ribes was surgeon to the Emperor's quarters in Russia.

<sup>4</sup> Wellington entered Madrid, August 12, 1812; and Soult raised the siege of Cadiz on the 25th.

those matters, which our wearisome marches and the pre-occupation preceding and following the military events had necessarily put into the background, now came to the forefront of his thoughts; yet these grave concerns never distracted the Emperor from the great concerns actually keeping him in Moscow.

Accustomed as he was to dictate peace on his arrival at the palaces of the sovereigns whose capitals he had conquered, he was amazed by the silence of his adversary. The more this silence demonstrated the enthusiasm of the enemy and the exasperation of the nation, the more Napoleon was convinced that peace could only be made at Moscow. His moderation ought to conciliate everyone; he had cleared himself of blame for the fire; he had even done all in his power to arrest the disaster. "It is difficult to see," he said, "any special motive for animosity that should prevent us coming to an understanding. Having reached the ancient capital of Russia, it would seem a political defeat to leave it without having signed the preliminaries for peace, however advantageous from a military point of view another position would be." The eyes of Europe were upon him, and a certain success in the spring would be nothing less, to-day, than a reverse in their eyes, and might entail grave consequences.

Thus pressed to bring matters to a finish, rather than place himself in a position on his flanks where he would be faced with a menacing attitude that could only delay even longer the peace which he flattered himself he had won, the Emperor would have made easy terms, for the sake of bringing the struggle to a conclusion; as much for the sake of the army as to show the enemy the dangers they might run. He repeated that his position at Moscow was very disquieting, and even menacing, for Russia, should Kutusoff suffer the slightest reverse. Enlightened, however, by the character that this war had assumed as well as by the enemy's silence, as to the very real dangers of his position, the Emperor was from that moment prepared to evacuate Russia and content himself with obtaining some measures against English commerce to save the honour of his arms. He tried his utmost to achieve his

end in appearance, but, embarrassed as to how he should make these sacrifices without offering them at the outset as concessions imposed by necessity, he set great store on opening negotiations that should lead to explanations and, in his opinion, a prompt reconciliation.

He hoped to win over the Emperor Alexander by giving him the means of offering to his nation an arrangement that could only have been reached by his own personal efforts. Imbued with this idea, and dismissing from his mind the unfortunate memory of the steps already taken, Napoleon determined to write directly to the Tsar, and M. Lelorgne was ordered to search the hospitals, or amongst the Russian prisoners, for some senior officer who might be sent to Petersburg. He found the brother of a Russian diplomatic agent in Germany.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor repeated to him exactly what he had said to M. Toutolmine. He put forward the same views on reconciliation and peace, but this officer respectfully expressed his doubts as to the possibility of coming to an understanding so long as the French remained in Moscow. The Emperor paid little heed to his observations at the time, but sent the officer away with his letter, still deluding himself that the silence of Petersburg was to be attributed to what he called their exaggerated pretensions, and that they would eagerly seize the opportunity of profiting by his avowed moderation. It was this fatal belief, this unfortunate hope, that made him stay on in Moscow and brave a winter that exacted a greater toll than any plague could have done.

This move was at the time known only to the Prince of Neuchâtel, M. Lelorgne and myself, and remained secret for a long time, as the Emperor desired.

I return now to the King of Naples, who had confidently

<sup>1</sup> This refers to Alexis Jakowlef, whose brother was Russian Minister at Cassel. On September 2nd he left Moscow with a letter from Napoleon to Alexander, dated the 20th. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19213.) Jakowlef published an account of his interview with Napoleon, reprinted in *La Revue des Etudes Napoléoniennes*, 1931, II, 45.

followed up the Russian Army along the Kasan road. He came to pass a night at Moscow, saw the Emperor, and next day returned to the advance-guard.

While the King was in Moscow the Viceroy, the Princes of Neuchâtel and Eckmühl, and His Majesty happened to be all four with the Emperor; the Emperor raised the question whether it would not be sound policy to march at once to Petersburg.<sup>1</sup> According to the King, the Russians were in full flight, in a state of complete disorder and discouragement, while the Cossacks were ready to leave the army at any moment. Did Napoleon really believe in the possibility of such an expedition? Did he imagine he would have time to carry it out before the hard frosts set in? Did he think the army in a fit state to carry it out? From what he said previously and afterwards to the Prince of Neuchâtel, it was clear to me that he never really entertained this project, impracticable in view of the state of our artillery and cavalry, while Kutusoff was so close to us with a well-organized army and numerous cavalry.<sup>2</sup>

The Viceroy and the Marshals were less deluded than the King regarding the supposed disorder of the Russians. They dwelt on our army's need of rest, and on the necessity of ensuring as soon as possible good winter quarters for its re-organization.

The Emperor would have liked to give a turn to the opinion

<sup>1</sup> According to Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 95) Napoleon must have thought of this idea during the night of September 16th-17th, which he passed at Petrowskoie, and mentioned it in the morning. But the plan envisaging the manœuvre on Petersburg, although bearing no date, can only have been dictated subsequently.

<sup>2</sup> At St. Helena, Napoleon said: "At that time it would have been impossible to have taken a decision of marching on St. Petersburg. The Russian Court feared this and sent the archives and most precious jewels to London. . . . Considering that it was as far from Moscow to St. Petersburg as from Smolensk to St. Petersburg, Napoleon preferred to pass the winter at Smolensk on the borders of Lithuania and march in the spring time on St. Petersburg." (*Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France sous le règne de Napoléon*, VIII, 165.)

held by the army, to distract it from its losses by persuading it that it was still fit for any undertaking. He would have liked to disperse the echoes from Petersburg which lingered in Moscow, and was anxious to know what was in the minds of the intelligent men in the army. There was no further question of this project and we stayed in Moscow. But the Emperor had been struck by the King of Naples's observations and evinced great pleasure in repeating what he said, what he had written, and what he kept on writing several times a day as soon as he was back with the advance-guard: namely, that the Russians were completely discouraged, that even the officers cursed Poland and the Poles, that at Petersburg nobody troubled about that country, that the senior officers themselves announced openly that they wanted and requested peace; and that this desire was so loudly proclaimed even in the ranks that the Emperor Alexander had been informed of it. His reply was being awaited. Even Marshal Kutusoff was said to be strongly in favour of peace.

The Russians diverted the King with this talk, paralysed his activity by their solicitous attentions, and the advance-guard, wholly occupied in the exchange of compliments, made scarcely any progress from day to day. This was all the more to the taste of our troops, who regretted every step that took them further from the Moscow cellars and all the good things that were being enjoyed by those who remained in the city. Thanks to their nearness to the capital, they were still able to participate every day in these things, for it was possible to send in messengers every day and to procure provisions.

Pleased as he was with the news from the King, the Emperor threw doubts on his reports as to the Russian retreat.

“Murat is their dupe. It is impossible that Kutusoff should stay on that road;<sup>1</sup> by doing so he covers neither Petersburg nor the southern provinces.”

<sup>1</sup> The advance-guard, commanded by Murat, and in his absence by Sébastiani, had pursued the enemy at first along the Vladimir and Kasan road, afterwards along the Kolomna and Riazan road. It had cleared the river as far as Bronitsoui. Arrived there,

The Emperor repeated these words at every opportunity, and even joked about this march, about which he appeared to have doubts. In vain did he order the King to push the enemy vigorously, in vain did he advise him to place no trust in the Russians, to send out strong reconnaissances in order to find out what they were planning and the direction they were following. It was in vain even that he made the King start from Moscow sooner than he wished to do, for fear that his Generals might not act with sufficient energy.

Reluctant to place himself at too great a distance, and doubtless not realizing the importance of the Emperor's orders,<sup>1</sup> the King acted in a leisurely way, made but a slight advance each day, merely changing his position from one place to another. (I am repeating what I heard at the time from the Emperor.) To justify his slowness the King repeated that he was coaxing the Cossacks, who no longer wished to fight against us; that he might have attacked them, though they would not fire on our troops; in short, that they were no longer defending themselves, but were actually on the point of leaving the Russian Army. He added, moreover, that he found the peasants very discontented, and many of them already talking of gaining their freedom.

The Prince of Neuchâtel showed me two of these letters; the Emperor let me see three or four more, all containing the same details, and asked me what I thought.

"I think they are fooling the King of Naples," I said.

The Emperor and the Prince thought likewise.

Seeing the uselessness of his repeated orders to the King that he should push the enemy vigorously and send out reconnaissances in different directions to find out where

Sebastiani discovered that there was nothing behind the curtain of Cossacks that always hung in front of him. His report of this reached the Kremlin during the night of 21st-22nd. On the 22nd, the surprise attack in the direction of Mojaisk that has already been mentioned was delivered, and this made the Emperor fear that Kutusoff was only manœuvring to cut off his retreat.

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon ordered Murat to proceed from the Riazan road to the Toula road and to advance until he had obtained some news of Kutusoff.

Kutusoff was and unmask his movements, the Emperor formed a corps for the Duke of Istria, composed of Davout's infantry and the cavalry of the Guard, to which he joined La Houssaye's division.<sup>1</sup>

Suspecting that the Russians would try to cover Kalouga, the Emperor sent the Marshal to Desna with orders to push forward until his advance-guard was actually on the tracks of the Russian army.<sup>2</sup> It was also necessary to drive off those bodies of enemy who were only a day distant from Moscow, harassing us, and even intercepting our foraging parties. Bessières arrived at Desna on the 25th, while Poniatowski entered Podolsk, where he was joined by the King of Naples, who had recognized his error and began to carry out the movements on Kalouga ordered by the Emperor. Up to this time he had kept in constant touch with the Cossacks. Having given them his watch and his jewels, he would even have given them the shirt off his back, had he not discovered that the good Cossacks were playing with him and keeping him on the Kasan road while the Russian Army, masked by their manœuvres, had been on the Kalouga road for five days, having made their march at night, lit up by the flames of the burning capital.<sup>3</sup>

On the 19th Kutusoff had taken up his position near Desna and entrenched himself. But in consequence of the King of Naples's reports, Napoleon did not know for certain until the 26th what were the enemy's suspected movements. There was nothing to do but make the best of it. The Emperor complained bitterly of the King, and did not mince words

<sup>1</sup> This corps actually comprised the 3rd Corps of Cavalry, the 4th Division of Davout's corps, the Colbert brigade of Lancers of the Guard. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19216: Napoleon to Berthier, September 21st.)

<sup>2</sup> Bessières at first followed the Toula road, then, veering to the south-west, he made for Desna, on the Kalouga road.

<sup>3</sup> Taking advantage of the course of the Pakra, which describes a semicircle to the south of Moscow, Kutusoff had been at Krasnaia-Pakra on the Kalouga road since the 19th. During this march his army had seen the glow of the fires of Moscow, and Kutusoff had naturally placed the responsibility of these on the French.

either to his face or in his despatches, but he had to resign himself to having on his flank those very Russians whose movement towards Kasan he had, rightly, been unable to explain to himself.

To the details which the Emperor had previously recounted as to the Cossacks' behaviour towards the King, the Emperor added the following particulars, saying that he advised his ambassadors to be as "slim" and shrewd as those barbarian Cossack officers had been.

Had the King the desire to march? A Cossack colonel would come and beseech him not to fight uselessly. "We are not your enemies," he would say. "We want peace; we are awaiting a reply from Petersburg." If the King insisted, the colonel would inquire where he desired to go, so that they could act accordingly. He was asked where he wished to establish his headquarters. Were we going to attack? The Russians would retire without showing opposition. During the two last days, it was even agreed that there should be no destruction or confiscation in the villages which the King was to occupy. Did he complain of finding no inhabitants, and all the houses abandoned? He was told that he would find all the inhabitants in the village where he was placing his headquarters; everything was kept ready and prepared for him. However, the less friendly Cossacks, or those who were not aware of what was afoot, seized some horses, carriages and all the provisions which the King and his staff had brought up from Moscow. The King was angry, and satisfaction was promised.

While he was waiting this, the King, who had taken umbrage on receiving the order to support the Duke of Istria's movements, threw forward his reconnaissances, and at last perceived that there was merely a curtain of the enemy before him, and that his courteous Cossacks, so ready to make common cause with us, had all the while been playing with him, and that the Russian Army, which he had believed to be on the Kasan road, was already in position and well established on the Kalouga road. The King's credulity, which might have proved so fatal to us if the enemy had seized the oppor-

tunity of their night movement to make an attack on Moscow, actually bore no bad results for us; so the Emperor contented himself with making a joke of it. It is impossible to gauge the consequences that might have ensued had the enemy shown any audacity, for they would have caught our men in all the disorder that accompanies pillage parties, while we ourselves were secure in our belief, founded on the King's despatches, that the Russian Army was in full retreat.

Our troops were concentrated on the point occupied by the Russians, and the Emperor, seeing that the enemy army that had been defeated at the Moskowa and, according to the King of Naples, was disorganized and demoralized by the taking of Moscow, was yet in a position so near us that our men could hope for no rest, decided to make an attack if the offensive operations of the King, supported by the Duke of Istria and the Poles, had not obliged the Russians to retreat. He accordingly gave the order to advance. On the 27th<sup>1</sup> it looked as if the enemy wished to defend their position, and this decided the Emperor to prepare everything for action. But on the 29th he learned, as he had anticipated, that Kutusoff had withdrawn to the entrenchments he had thrown up behind the Nara.<sup>2</sup> Bessières returned to Moscow. During these operations there were several skirmishes to our advantage, one of which was greatly to the honour of the Polish corps and Prince Poniatowski.

By September 23rd our convoys were already somewhat disturbed; the *pourparlers* between our advance-guard and the Cossacks were still being carried on; and the Emperor was displeased and forbade their continuance. The purport of these conversations was repeated in Moscow and came back to the Emperor; and the matter seemed so grave that he gave it

<sup>1</sup> After the 26th Kutusoff had retreated as far as Babenkovo. On the 27th he moved to Woronovo, where he made a show of offering resistance.

<sup>2</sup> On the 28th Kutusoff was at Winkovo. At last, on the 29th, he took up his position about Taroutino, still on the road from Moscow to Kalouga and put himself into position for holding Podolsk.

his particular attention. He was especially suspicious of what was talked about with regard to General Sébastiani's corps.

"These communications," said Napoleon, "are made for no other purpose than to alarm the army about its remoteness from France, and the climate, and the winter. I know it is being said that this is an unjust war, that it is impolitic, and my attack on the Russians an act of iniquity. My soldiers are being told of the peaceful aims of the Tsar, of his moderation and his liking for the French. By their smooth speeches the Russians are trying to turn our brave fellows into traitors, to paralyse the courage of stout-hearted men, and to gain partisans for their cause. Murat is the dupe of men far more astute than himself. In spite of what Belliard<sup>1</sup> and other good men tell him, he is carried away by the assumed respect and reverence of the Cossacks. Having been deceived as to the direction Kutusoff had taken, he would have been misled much more seriously had I not called him to order. I will have the first man who speaks with the enemy shot, even if he be a General."

Indeed, orders were promulgated absolutely forbidding any intercourse with the enemy *under pain of death*, and to spare the susceptibilities of the King of Naples this order was addressed to General Sébastiani.<sup>2</sup>

Matters had reached such a pitch that a sort of tacit armistice was in operation with the advance-guard, and the enemy profited by this to lull our suspicions and send parties to Smolensk, where they burned fifteen of our ammunition wagons which they were unable to carry away. These parties delayed the couriers, made the rear posts of the army uneasy, and caused the Emperor one of the greatest annoyances he

<sup>1</sup> General Belliard, Acting Major-General of Cavalry, had been wounded in the leg at Mojaïsk, and was being cared for at Moscow.

<sup>2</sup> See Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 177, for Berthier's letter to Murat, dated Moscow, September 22nd, four o'clock in the afternoon: "His Majesty has dictated to me the letter enclosed for General Sébastiani; he decrees the penalty of death for any officer who shall talk under flag of truce with the enemy's outposts without authority to do so." With regard to the letter from the Emperor to Sébastiani, an extract of this is given by Dennié (Itinéraire, 100).

suffered during the whole of the campaign. This mania for having intercourse with the enemy even spread to the troops under the command of the Duke of Istria. The Emperor found it such a vexation that he even disapproved of two flags of truce having been received and forbade the Duke to admit any more, ordering him to have any further letters from the enemy accepted at the outposts and handed back, in order to avoid any personal conversations.

"All these talkings under a flag of truce," he said to Berthier in my hearing, "serve no good save to those who send them, and they invariably turn out to our disadvantage."

He ordered Berthier to send this message to the Marshal.<sup>1</sup>

Almost every day the Emperor rode out to visit the different quarters of the city, and inspected the convents in the surroundings, whose high walls gave them the appearance of small citadels. He frequently pushed his reconnaissances to a considerable distance. These convents were either strongly garrisoned or served as barracks. The Emperor had their walls loopholed and put in a state that they could be defended by small detachments in the event of the army advancing to give battle. He gave particular care to the question of provisions, not only for immediate needs but for the winter, as though he had decided to remain in Moscow. He paid special attention to the rank and file, their way of living, and the construction of the defensive works he had ordered. He worked all day and part of the night. France was administered, Germany and Poland felt the impulse of his mind, just as if he had been at the Tuileries. Every day couriers brought despatches and went off with orders to France and Europe. This courier service had become so regular that despatches arrived every day about two o'clock.

After dinner the Emperor received the Marshals, the Viceroy, and such Generals of Division as could leave their commands for a brief period. Three or four times a week he

<sup>1</sup> Berthier's letter to Bessières, Moscow, September 27th, 2 a.m., is published by Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 185. It says: "All these conversations with the enemy invariably turn to our disadvantage and served one purpose to those who initiate them."

had some of them to dine with the Marshals. In the conversations that followed the meal the Emperor gave the direction he desired to the opinion of those present, and talked politics in the sense that he wished the army to understand them.

French actors,<sup>1</sup> Italian singers, Tarquinio, the famous tenor,<sup>2</sup> and various foreign craftsmen had remained in Moscow up to the very moment of the evacuation of which they knew nothing, and had been ignorant as to how or where to take refuge. The fire and subsequent pillage left them destitute; Tarquinio had scarcely been able to save a single piece of clothing. The Emperor gave them assistance. Everyone took an interest in them; but of what use was money where there was nothing left to buy? It was bread, food, that they needed. Most of the foodstuffs had become the property of those who had discovered the stores and hiding-places, and everyone kept what he had for himself or his friends. Money could buy neither bread nor meat. What was left in the hands of the administration after serving rations was reserved for the hospitals and convalescents; the corps lived on what they had collected, and this they sought to augment every day. Everyone came to the help of the actors and singers; everyone had some unfortunate refugees to nourish; and the Russians, like the foreigners remaining in Moscow, would have died of hunger had we not succoured them. Some of the Polish officers of the Guard, knowing Russian, were better able than we were to deal with the needs of the unfortunate Russians.

<sup>1</sup> There was at Moscow a troop of French comedians under the management of Madame Aurora Bursay, "a woman of from forty-five to fifty years of age, witty, strong-minded and courageous." She was a poetess, having written some verses to Voltaire, and was the wife of M. Bursay, "translator of the play *Misanthropie et Repentir*, which moved all Paris to tears and was put on the repertory of the Théâtre Français." Madame Bursay had long held the management of the Théâtre Français at Petersburg. (Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 127.)

<sup>2</sup> "I found a gifted singer, named Signor Tarquinio. This was the same artist who has subsequently gained for himself a brilliant reputation in Italy in the roles of Crescentini. He had been living in Moscow for two years." (Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 130.)

Notable among them was Count Krasinski.<sup>1</sup> They earned the respect of all upright men by their humane behaviour.

The Emperor would have liked to put some prominent Russian at the head of the municipal administration, if only in the interests of the remaining inhabitants. Search was made for such a man, but M. Toutolmine was the only person suitable, and he was too badly needed at the head of his institution to accept other functions.<sup>2</sup>

As it was long since the Emperor had discussed matters with me, and as the Prince of Neuchâtel at the outset had but a very imperfect knowledge of the negotiations which the Emperor had tried to open up, I only knew of them later. Having invariably found my opinion opposed to his own, the Emperor was so frequently out of humour with me that I did not venture to see even M. Toutolmine. As to M. Zagriaski and the other Russians whom I had taken under my protection during the catastrophe, I had to request the Grand Marshal to make known my action to the Emperor lest it should be misinterpreted. In any case, they were all old men, and people of such insignificance that they had long since ceased to be connected with the government. The Emperor wished to employ them in the administration of the city, and later hinted that he would like to see them; but they refused to undertake any function and declined the honour the Emperor wished to do them, for the very just reason that they had no clothes to wear. It is impossible to conceive their state of destitution.

Some of the actors thought that they would be able to organize an entertainment, and that the presence of so many soldiers with time to spare would bring money into their pockets. As a means of furnishing amusement and likely to

<sup>1</sup> Count Vincent Corvin Krasinski (born at Borembel, Poland, January 30, 1783; died at Warsaw, November 24, 1858) was Chamberlain to the Emperor and colonel commanding the 1st Regiment of Light Horse of the Polish Guard. He was promoted General of Brigade, December 16, 1811, and General of Division, November 28, 1813.

<sup>2</sup> The administration of Moscow was entrusted to M. de Lèsesps, Consul-General of France at Moscow.

bring the men together, the idea was adopted, and the Emperor authorized the opening of the entertainment, entrusting M. de Bausset with the organization. Some old hangings were bought, as well as a quantity of pillaged furniture and effects; in fact, sufficient properties and old garments to clothe the actors.<sup>1</sup> Tarquinio made earnest entreaties that the Emperor should hear him, and sang before His Majesty on two occasions. This was done entirely in private, and lasted a half-hour at the most, there being no other audience than officers of the Emperor's household.<sup>2</sup> I felt myself justified in not going, as I never left my own quarters except to accompany the Emperor on horseback. I read much and had no lack of books, although the Galitzin residence where I had established myself and my staff, with the carriages, had been completely ransacked during the night we had gone to Petrowskoie. In the Kremlin I occupied two small rooms opening on the southern terrace. With the exception of the state apartments nothing was furnished, and we were obliged to buy furniture salvaged from burning houses or from abandoned joiners' shops. In this way I bought for a few napoleons portraits of the entire Imperial family of Russia, which the troops were using as screens in their bivouacs.

The Emperor continually grumbled that he could get no news as to what was happening in Russia. As a matter of fact, nothing passed through to us; no secret agent dared to penetrate into the country. Direct communications were extremely difficult, almost impossible. It was not possible to find a single person who for either gold or silver would go to Petersburg or penetrate into the army. The Cossacks were the only enemy troops with whom we came into contact, and

<sup>1</sup> De Bausset found these costumes in the church of Ivan, where the military administration had collected everything that could be saved from the flames. The performances took place in the private theatre of the Posniakof Palace. The opening piece was *Jeux de l'Amour et du Hasard*, and eleven performances were given during the stay in Moscow. (Cf. Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 129.)

<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the Emperor was never present at the performances at the Posniakof Palace. (Cf. Bausset, *Mémoires*, II, 130.)

however eager the Emperor was to obtain prisoners from whom he might abstract some information, the skirmishers did not succeed in getting any. The sole information received by the Emperor as to events in Russia came from Vienna, Warsaw and Berlin, by way of Wilna.<sup>1</sup> News therefore passed through many hands before it reached him.

The King of Naples continually repeated what Kutusoff had doubtless instructed the Cossack officers to tell him, namely, that "they were tired of war, that the Russians wanted peace, that an understanding ought to be reached, that there were no real motives for prolonging the struggle." The King invariably represented the Russian Army as disheartened and the officers, especially the Generals, as worn out, tired of war, and eager to return to their own homes and get back to Petersburg, from whence an answer was constantly expected. In this way the hopes, or rather the desires, of the Emperor were flattered. Only the Viceroy and the Prince of Neuchâtel hold a different language. Notwithstanding all these fine speeches from the Russians, he received no word in reply to his overtures. But the silence of the Russian cabinet did not enlighten him as to what he could hope for from negotiations; nothing indeed could persuade him. The stories told by the King of Naples, which he continually ridiculed, none the less fed the hopes he wanted to entertain, in spite of the reflections he must have had, in common with the rest of us, on the subject.

The weather was so fine and the temperature so mild that even the country people were amazed. It seemed as if even the seasons were conspiring to deceive the Emperor.<sup>2</sup> Every day His Majesty remarked very pointedly when I was present, that "the autumn at Moscow was finer and even warmer than at Fontainebleau." He rode on horseback every day, and I do not think he once went out without ironically comparing the weather and temperature with that of France, or without adding, as he hummed one of the old airs to which he adapted

<sup>1</sup> Where the Duke of Bassano was in constant residence.

<sup>2</sup> "Magnificent weather; the country people say: 'God must be with you, it is usually much colder.'" (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 166.)

certain phrases or apposite verses, "*A beau mentir qui vient de loin.*" Then, for fear that this reflection was not sufficiently pointed, he would sometimes add, remarking on the bright sunshine, "So this is the terrible Russian winter that M. de Caulaincourt frightens the children with."

We had been three weeks in Moscow, and since the battle the Emperor had not mentioned to me the loss of my brother, although he had been most honourably mentioned in the bulletin.<sup>1</sup>

"What can I do for your brother's aides-de-camp?" were the first words he addressed me about a loss which had been very painful to me. "They must be fine officers, for their General was a splendid man. He would have gone far."

I answered His Majesty that, when he would permit me, I would present several proposals for promotion and reward for them, and for all the officers of my brother's staff, as well as his orderly officers, for whom nothing had been done.

"Let me have it to-day," was the Emperor's reply.<sup>2</sup> His silence about my brother arose solely from his irritation with me, for he spoke well of him to the Prince of Neuchâtel and to Duroc.

On the evening of the battle he had said to the Prince of Neuchâtel, speaking of my brother:

"He was my best cavalry officer. He had a quick eye, and he was brave. By the end of the campaign he would have replaced Murat."

<sup>1</sup> In the 18th Bulletin, dated from Mojaisk, September 10, 1812, after recounting the charge of the 5th Cuirassiers, with General Auguste de Caulaincourt at the head, and their entry into the redoubt by the gorge, the Emperor added: "From that moment there was no longer any uncertainty, the battle was gained. . . . Count de Caulaincourt, who distinguished himself by this splendid charge, there ended his career; he fell dead, struck by a bullet: a glorious and enviable death!"

<sup>2</sup> To make this passage clear I ought to observe that the orderly officers, all the aides-de-camp of Generals on the Emperor's staff, interpreter officers, and all Generals or officers attached by the Emperor to his headquarters, were under the orders of the Master of the Horse. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

The Emperor granted all the promotions I suggested to him, particularly those for my brother's aides, but he never spoke another word to me about him.<sup>1</sup>

In the first days of September the crossing of the Dneister by the army of Moldavia, of which the Emperor received news at this time,<sup>2</sup> as well as the reports of what was happening on

<sup>1</sup> A note by Caulaincourt, preserved in his *Archives*, gives a list of the names of his brother's orderly officers for whom he asked some reward. They were: Captain Cham, proposed for the Legion of Honour; Captain Chasteigner, proposed as orderly officer to the Emperor; Lieutenant Wolbert, proposed promotion as captain. Joseph Antoine Barthélémy Cham, born at Marseilles, October 3, 1782; captain, November 8, 1809; had been gazetted orderly officer to Auguste de Caulaincourt, February 28, 1808. He did not receive the Officer's Cross of the Legion of Honour but was promoted major, October 3, 1812, at the time of the promotion of officers in imperial headquarters. Cham became aide-de-camp to the Duke of Vicenza, December 5, 1812. He was retired from the active list, September 1, 1815, and does not appear to have been re-employed. Alexander Armand de Chasteigner, born December 27, 1784, nephew of General d'Harville, had been appointed aide-de-camp to Auguste de Caulaincourt, February 11, 1808. The Emperor appointed him orderly officer to himself, as the Duke of Vicenza had requested, September 23, 1812. He was promoted major, February 26, 1813, and appointed to the 2nd Carabiniers on March 16th following. He was retired September 2, 1814, and died in November, 1867. Chasteigner had a brother, René de Chasteigner, who, from April 15, 1812, was aide-de-camp to the Duke of Vicenza. Severely wounded in Russia, on June 25, 1813, he was promoted major, in the 5th Chasseurs. Lieutenant Wolbert, aide-de-camp to Auguste de Caulaincourt from April 1812, was gazetted first lieutenant to the Dragoon Guards on September 23, 1812. In the *Archives de Caulaincourt*, File No. 8, there exists a letter from Berthier to the Duke of Vicenza, dated Moscow, September 23, 1812, in the following terms: "The Emperor is according to the aides-de-camp of your late brother what you have asked for them. His Majesty deeply regrets that he was not able to accord these favours in response to the request of one whom the army has seen perish too early on the field of honour and glory."

<sup>2</sup> Tchitchagoff left Bucharest on July 31st with the army of Moldavia which he commanded. Having crossed the Dniester on September 4th, on the 18th he joined Tormasov in the

*Continued overleaf*

the Dwina,<sup>1</sup> kept him deeply concerned. The Russians had taken the initiative at this point. Although they had been repulsed in their attack on Polotsk on the 18th, Marshal Saint-Cyr, who had been wounded, was obliged to evacuate the place on the 19th. Although all the details of this fine manoeuvre were entirely to our advantage, the possible consequences perturbed the Emperor. The Duke of Taranto had also had a warm encounter at the end of August, and the Russians had attacked Dunaburg at the same time as Polotsk.<sup>2</sup>

The Finland division of ten thousand men under General Steinheil, whose arrival the Emperor had foreseen, went into the line under the orders of Essen,<sup>3</sup> who was supporting Wittgenstein. York had replaced Gravert in command of the Prussians.<sup>4</sup> All these reports that reached the Emperor were grave; everything pointed to the difficulty of his position. But the greater the difficulties the more determined he was to overcome them, and he thought to triumph over the difficulties and dangers that surrounded him on all sides by evincing an assurance and at the same time by overtures of peace which, made directly, would lead, if not to immediate negotiations,

neighbourhood of Lourds. Schwarzenberg retired upon Brest-Litowsk, where the two armies once again faced one another on October 9th. Tchitchagoff forced his adversary to recross the Bug and pursued him to Wengrow and Bialystok.

<sup>1</sup> General Steinheil, with 12,000 Swedes, arrived at Riga on September 20th, and attacked the Prussians on the 26th. As a result of the battles of the 28th, 29th and 30th, York was obliged to withdraw, but Steinheil had by that time joined Wittgenstein, in concert with whom he gave battle to Gouvion Saint-Cyr on October 18th and 19th. This was the second battle of Polotsk, and it determined our retreat.

<sup>2</sup> Operations of Wittgenstein's corps against the 10th Army Corps (Macdonald).

<sup>3</sup> General Baron von Essen was Governor of Riga.

<sup>4</sup> On October 13th Lieutenant-General York replaced Lieutenant-General von Gravert in the command of the 27th Division of the Prussian contingent (Macdonald's corps). "It was not long before relations between General York and Marshal Macdonald became very strained." (Clausewitz, *La Campagne de 1812*, 182.)

at least to an armistice, which would bring these to pass if only conversations could be started.

Our situation in Moscow was no better than that of our rear. Hospitals and refugees were on the verge of starvation. The Duke of Treviso made requisitions, but the administration reserved the little that had been saved for more urgent demands. For the most part the corps had reserves of supplies, but the services which a proper administration could supply were in dire need, having neither soldiers nor transports to bring them up. The Emperor had thought that here, as in other campaigns, he would meet with concerns which for gold, or at any rate paper, would deliver what was required, but where there was no proper administration there could be no contractors. Undaunted by difficulties, and, as usual, always seeking to evade what he could not surmount, he thought it would be practicable to make use of the most destitute refugees, for he imagined that the Cossacks who were harassing our own lines of supply would take pity on their compatriots, and thus supply their needs and part of what we ourselves wanted. He therefore ordered the formation of a Russian company to go out into the villages to purchase food; but no one dared to volunteer for it, although they were promised payment in ready cash, for they knew perfectly well that the Cossacks would treat the inhabitants of Moscow no better than they treated its garrison.

On October 22nd or 23rd the Emperor, who had not discussed affairs with me for a long time, asked me whether I thought that the Tsar would be disposed to make peace if overtures were made to him. He did not tell me of those which he had already attempted. I answered frankly that it seemed to me that the sacrifice of Moscow argued a far from pacific disposition, that the more the season advanced the greater were the chances in favour of Russia; in a word, that it was scarcely probable that he would have set fire to his capital with the object of signing a peace among the ruins.

“Will you go to Petersburg?” the Emperor asked me. “You would see the Tsar Alexander, I would entrust you with a letter, and you would make peace.”

I answered that it would be useless to send me on such a mission, as I should not be received. Assuming a jocular and kindly air, the Emperor told me that I did not know what I was saying; for the Tsar would be all the more eager to profit by the opportunity given him to enter into negotiations, inasmuch as his nobles, already ruined by the war and the burning of Moscow, were anxious for peace. He was certain of it. "That fire," he added, "was the sort of folly of which a madman might boast when he kindled the flame, but which he would repent next day. The Tsar Alexander sees quite well that his Generals are incapable, and that the best of troops can do nothing under such leadership."

He continued to press me with arguments to convince me of what he said, and to induce me to accept this mission.

In vain did I repeat all the objections I have mentioned above. The Emperor replied that I was mistaken; that he had just heard from Petersburg that they were packing up in the utmost hurry; that the most valuable effects had already been sent into the interior and even to England;<sup>1</sup> that the Tsar was labouring under no further illusions, for he saw his army diminished and disheartened, while the French army was all ready to march on Petersburg. The season was still favourable, he added, and by such a march the Russian Empire would be lost, for a defeat would gravely embarrass the Tsar, so that he would seize with eagerness any overture made by us, as it would furnish him with an honourable way of getting out of the unfortunate position in which he was placed.

Finding that he was unable to shake my resolution, the Emperor added that, beginning with myself, everyone who had been in Russia had told him fairy-tales about the climate. He then insisted anew on his proposals. Thinking perhaps that my repugnance came from some feeling of embarrassment I might experience at going to Petersburg, where I had

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon was well informed. It was true that Alexander had sent to Archangel and Abo a great quantity of valuables. Part of this treasure was embarked on vessels of the Russian Fleet with orders, at the first signal, to make for England.

been so worthily treated, at a moment when Russia was being thus ravaged, the Emperor said:

“Very well! Just to Marshal Kutusoff’s headquarters.”

I replied that either would be equally unsuccessful, and added that I recalled what the Tsar Alexander said to me on another occasion, and that I knew his character and was refusing this mission because I was certain he would never sign a peace in his capital. As this overture of ours, I concluded, could achieve nothing, it was advisable not to make it.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor turned on his heels abruptly, saying:

“Very well, I shall send Lauriston. He shall have the honour of making peace and saving his crown for your friend Alexander.”

Shortly afterwards, indeed, the Emperor entrusted M. Lauriston with this mission.

Lauriston presented himself at the Russian headquarters on the 4th and 5th and was handsomely received, being despatched back with the promise that his letter should be forwarded to the Tsar Alexander.<sup>2</sup> Kutusoff had refused to let him proceed, but it seemed to him that everyone was anxious to put a term to this struggle, of which the Russians seemed even more wearied than we were.<sup>3</sup> It was said that a reply would shortly

<sup>1</sup> Ségur (*Histoire de Napoléon*, II, 75) recounts this refusal of Caulaincourt. General Gourgaud (*Napoléon et la Grande Armée*, 300) denies the likelihood of this account. Ségur was right.

<sup>2</sup> Lauriston left Moscow by carriage, October 4th, for Kutusoff’s headquarters. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 164.) Met at the advance posts by Prince Wolkonsky, aide-de-camp to the Tsar, he vainly insisted on seeing Kutusoff in person. Being unable to obtain an audience, he withdrew to Murat’s headquarters. In the course of the night, however, the Russian General changed his mind and Lauriston was eventually able to interview him. As a result of this conference Kutusoff sent Prince Wolkonsky to Petersburg with Napoleon’s overtures to the Tsar. Caulaincourt is wrong in saying that there was any letter from Napoleon; in reality, Lauriston apparently carried no written document with him.

<sup>3</sup> Clausewitz, to prove that Napoleon’s deductions were not based on entire illusions, writes: “At this period there was a general feeling of despondency and mourning in the Russian Army. No other issue than a prompt peace seemed possible” (*La Campagne de 1812*, 144.)

be received from Petersburg, and this delighted the Emperor, who hoped and desired a suspension of hostilities while terms were being made. He supposed that, as was customary in similar circumstances, there would be nothing to do but settle the lines each side was to preserve while the negotiations were going forward.<sup>1</sup>

From what the Prince of Neuchâtel and Duroc told me, the Emperor attributed the Tsar's silence regarding the overtures made at Smolensk,<sup>2</sup> and since our arrival at Moscow, to the conviction held by the Russians since the return of Balachoff from Wilna, and thought that he would consider no arrangement that did not have the restoration of Poland on some scale as its basis. The Emperor began to think, however, that the course of events and the burning of the countryside had turned their heads, and that the destruction of Moscow had, for the time being at least, carried them away with enthusiasm. He even doubted whether his plenipotentiary would be received, and on the night before Lauriston's departure wrote to the King of Naples telling him to announce to the Russians that one of his aides-de-camp was being sent, and to assure himself in advance that he would be received.<sup>3</sup> At heart he still flattered himself that negotiations would be opened; at least he said so, and he must be believed, since he stayed at Moscow in spite of overtures remaining unanswered, and although the lapse of time since his first endeavours, and his reason itself, must have cried aloud that Alexander had no wish to treat. None the less, he stubbornly set to work on fresh approaches.

Like everyone else, the Emperor felt that his repeated messages, indicative of his embarrassment, could only confirm

<sup>1</sup> In his interview with Lauriston, Kutusoff refused any kind of armistice, but he had agreed that the advance posts should cease fire. Kutusoff reserved his freedom of action, however, in the two extreme wings, thus leaving the field free to the raids of Cossacks.

<sup>2</sup> Count Orloff's mission.

<sup>3</sup> This note from Berthier to Murat, dated October 4th, 4.30 a.m., has been published by Chuquet, 1812 *La Guerre de Russie*, 84. A second note from the same to the same, October 5th, 4.30 a.m., proves the Emperor's impatience to know the result of this affair.

the enemy in his hostile intentions. Yet he sent fresh messages ! For a man of such fine political sense, of such careful calculation, how blind must have been his faith, his confidence in his star ! What blindness or feebleness he must have attributed to his foes ! With his eagle eye and his pre-eminent judgment, how could he have entertained illusions on such a point ? I leave these reflections to observers of human nature, for such opposites in so great a character, this tendency of the heart to imagine what it most desires even in face of all improbabilities, would be a great reproach in a man of the Emperor's exalted judgment, were not this strange contradiction a part of our nature, and were not this hope a man's last consolation in adversity.

The King of Naples, who, despite all orders to the contrary, continued to treat with the enemy, repeated his assertions that the Cossacks did not want to fight any more, that the Russian Army desired peace as it was felt they were in an advantageous position owing to the arrival of reinforcements and could make a good peace, and that Marshal Kutusoff and all his Generals had written in this sense to the Tsar, whom they urged to listen to peace proposals. All these assertions accorded so well with the Emperor Napoleon's desires that they sustained the hopes which were to be his undoing. The Russian officers beguiled the King of Naples with all these tales. The Cossacks were accustomed to notice him, on account of his singular uniform, and seeing him the bravest man in the midst of his gallant skirmishers, always refrained from shooting in his direction. Their officers came to compliment him, assuring him, as before, that so highly did they admire his bravery that they were resolved never to fire on him but to content themselves with making him prisoner. One day, however, a Cossack who had evidently been imperfectly coached in this new system of advance-guard politics, fired a pistol almost point-blank at him while His Majesty was chatting and strolling about. Happily he was not hit. Instantly an officer came up to offer excuses and to assure His Majesty that this disloyal enemy would be punished. One good resulted from this incident. The King lost something

of his confidence, and was less inclined to believe in the pacific dispositions of these gentry.

Both the Prince of Neuchâtel and the Duke of Friuli repeated to me what I am about to recount as proof that the Emperor, who was detained at Moscow by his hopes of concluding a peace, had no illusions as to his position, although he tried to impose them upon many other people, especially myself. He kept telling us that the situation of Moscow, with its ruins and such resources as had been salvaged, was preferable to any other in Russia; that peace could only be made there; that the weather was superb; that a mistake had been made about the climate; that the autumn was finer at Moscow than at Fontainebleau. But while saying all this publicly, he admitted from the very outset, to those persons whom he honoured with his more intimate confidence, that Moscow was a bad situation, and that he could remain there only long enough to reorganize; that the Austrians and Prussians, the allies entrusted with the defence of our rear, would become our most dangerous enemies if we met with the slightest reverse.

However clear-sighted he may have been on this point, his enthusiasm was such, and so eager was he to nurture the illusions and hopes raised in his own mind, that he nursed the hope of receiving a reply from the Tsar, or at least negotiations for an armistice with Kutusoff, which should lead to further results. It might almost be said that he was carried away by the very difficulty of his situation and blinded as to his perils, so that every development combined to close his eyes and push him further in the path of danger.

The Prince of Neuchâtel had received, together with a despatch from Prince Schwarzenberg, a letter which gave him food for serious thought, as it also did to Daru, Duroc and myself, to whom he showed it. Prince Schwarzenberg's loyalty and honourable sentiments gave especial value to this letter. In brief, its sense was the following: "The position is already embarrassing, the situation may become graver; anyhow, whatever happened, the Prince assured Berthier of his personal sentiments and of the value he placed and would always place on his relations with him."

Discussing this letter with Berthier, the Emperor said:

"This gives warning of defection on the first opportunity. It may even have started already. The Austrians and the Prussians are our enemies in the rear——"

He paused, reflected and added:

"The die is cast. '*Du destin qui fait tout, telle est la loi suprême!*'"

Berthier urged the instant necessity of pursuing his original plan as soon as possible, which was to leave Moscow and move back towards Poland, as this would circumvent all their malice and double the strength of our forces.

"You are anxious to go to Grosbois and see the Visconti,"<sup>1</sup> was the Emperor's reply to him.

Seeing that he had hurt him, the Emperor added:

"This letter is sentimental nonsense. Schwarzenberg is making up to you because he prefers shooting your pheasants at Grosbois, or his own in Bohemia, to being worried every morning by Tormasov. On the other hand, Maret is very pleased with him. He knows all that is going on. All is well at Vienna, and even the Prussians are fighting perfectly. If there was anything happening, Maret has every means of information at hand and would know about it. He is satisfied; he tells me that all is well, and we will wait at Moscow for Alexander's reply, for he is much worse embarrassed than I am with his Senate and the Kutusoff they have forced upon him."

While headquarters were dreaming dreams of negotiations and peace, the Cossacks were harrying our foragers daily and seizing prisoners almost at the very gates of the city. They also appeared between Mojaisk and Moscow. A few isolated men were chased and captured; one courier was delayed fifteen hours, and this worried the Emperor extremely. Every quarter of an hour he asked me, as well as the Major-General, whether we had learned anything of the cause of his

<sup>1</sup> The beautiful Josephine Carcano, widow of Giovanni Sopransi, had married François Visconti. It was known that she was Berthier's mistress. The château of Grosbois, near Boissy-Saint-Léger, was Berthier's estate. His hunting parties were famous.

delay. I profited by the occasion to renew the demand I had been making ever since our arrival for an escort for the courier, even if only a couple of men; but to establish this at all the relays would have entailed a considerable detachment of troops, and the cavalry was already greatly reduced in strength. So the Emperor thought to dismiss the matter by saying that it was an unnecessary precaution as the road was perfectly safe.

Three days later the postillion driving the courier to Paris escaped several gunshots beyond Mojaisk, and was chased for a couple of leagues. Thereupon, the Emperor lost no time in sending out the detachments I had asked for.

Mojaisk, where the ambulance headquarters were, was surrounded by parties of the enemy, yet it was occupied by the corps of the Duke of Abrantes, while other troops were echeloned along the road by which strong detachments and convoys came from France every day. As I have said, the slightest delay in his communications with Paris irritated and disquieted the Emperor, though the enemy could have obtained no real advantage by seizing the despatches, as all important papers were in cipher. But it was disagreeable to him to see his communications with France threatened, nor did he desire the news to be known there, or in Europe, that the enemy was at our rear.

The Emperor became very preoccupied, and undoubtedly began to consider inwardly the inconveniences of the situation which he had hitherto sought to conceal. Neither the losses incurred in the battle nor the state of his cavalry had perturbed him so much as the appearance of a few Cossacks on our rear. During his conversations while walking, or at the reception after dinner where his Marshals and Generals were invited along with the principal personages of the household, the Emperor always talked of the fine weather, or how the winter could be spent in Moscow, of the blockhouses that he would establish for the protection of his camps, of his plans for keeping his men fit and rested and protected from the cold, of his project to place his cavalry within the lines, of the Polish Cossacks whom he was expecting and whom he would oppose to the Russians. The Emperor likewise openly announced

his intention of marching against Kutusoff to drive him further away and thus give the army some repose. He talked of the news he had received from the Duke of Bassano, of the considerable levies that were to be made in Poland, and the expected arrival of 6000 Cossacks from that country.

He enumerated the French divisions which were on the march to reinforce the corps on the Dwina, some of them to cover and echelon our own road. It was the Emperor's plan to establish another route of communication with France through less exhausted countries. To achieve this, he told the Prince of Neuchâtel, he was waiting the result of the operations to be undertaken by the corps on the Dwina. In his general conversation the Emperor represented Austria as being very amicably disposed, and frankly desiring our success in order to recover their maritime provinces and at the same time to see in the centre of Europe a buffer State in whose interest it would be to check the terrifying Russian colossus.

It was at this time that the Emperor instituted means for the evacuation of Generals and wounded unable to rejoin their units at once. To these were added men of the rank and file who had lost limbs, as well as cadres of non-commissioned officers taken from all the regiments, who were to organize the new corps that were being trained in France. Everyone was required to supply horses and carriages, the Emperor himself setting an example. The ambulance administration existing no longer save on paper, Lieutenant-General Nansouty, himself wounded, was placed in command of this convoy, which crossed the Niemen before the extreme cold set in, and luckily reached France in safety.<sup>1</sup> In preparation for this evacuation, the Emperor required from the Intendant-General<sup>2</sup> a report as to the time it would take to reach the Niemen, and was much upset at the estimated number of days, either because he did not like to think he was so far from his point of departure, or because he thought that others, making

<sup>1</sup> This convoy left Moscow on October 10th for Wilna. The escort was composed of cadres of the fourth battalions sent to the depots.

<sup>2</sup> Count Mathieu Dumas.

the same calculation for themselves, would be discouraged. He questioned the calculation and grew very angry, as if Count Dumas could have shortened the distance!<sup>1</sup>

The overtures made to Petersburg remained unanswered, and the Cossacks continued to harry the fringes of Moscow. They had even penetrated the suburbs, and seized men and horses who were not foraging. Strong escorts of cavalry and infantry were required for their protection. The couriers were often chased, and some would hardly have escaped capture had it not been for the failure of the Cossacks to realize the importance of the correspondence they carried, which was held up for forty-eight hours. Often the letters were only saved by the speed of the horse that bore them, and to the courage of the brave French postillions, who allowed no danger to hinder them and made it a point of honour to keep their despatches safe and deliver them. These delays and real dangers constantly threatening the post made a profound impression on the Emperor.

Although he dropped no hint as to plans for a retreat, not even to the Prince of Neuchâtel, I think it was at this juncture that the Emperor decided to evacuate Moscow and retire to Witepsk to take up the line he had formerly wished to hold and to place his troops in winter quarters. But although he had resolved to do this, he unfortunately continued to delay the execution of his plans, however much he realized the urgency of the matter, because he liked above all else to imagine that what he desired would be successful. He could not admit to himself that fortune, which had so often smiled upon him, had quite abandoned his cause just when he required miracles of her. He still wanted to hope that his overtures would lead to negotiations. I repeat, it was to this hope that he sacrificed the precious moments we were still to spend in

<sup>1</sup> According to Dennée (*Itinéraire*, 105) Dumas informed the Emperor that it would take fifty days to evacuate the wounded. According to Fain (*Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 147) this estimate should have been forty-five days. Not satisfied with this, Napoleon ordered Dumas to draw up a report on the state of the wounded. This showed a total exceeding 12,000 wounded and sick, of whom very few were fit to stand the fatigues of the road.

Moscow, moments that might have been used to save the army, when it is remembered that, had he started at once, there would have been time to reach Wilna before suffering the rigours of winter.

Instead of improving, our situation grew daily worse, owing to the difficulties forced upon us by the proximity of the enemy and the attacks of his numerous light troops.

We were continually on the look-out; the wearied artillery, already reduced in strength, had no repose whatever; the horses not actually with the guns were sent, like those of the cavalry, for wood and forage, the men in search of food. Beyond Ghjat our communications were always harassed and between Mojaisk and ourselves were frequently interrupted.

A new convoy of artillery had been attacked and several ammunition wagons captured near the manor of Wezianino, where the Emperor had slept before entering Moscow. Any-one could see in these preliminaries the signs of a new system of warfare designed to isolate us. It would have been im-possible to devise one that could have given the Emperor more trouble or have affected his interests more severely. We discussed it with him—the Prince of Neuchâtel, the Viceroy and myself, if I may venture to couple myself with such authorities.

Matters seemed to me to be taking so serious a turn that I felt it my duty to emerge from the reserve which I had so long imposed upon myself. I requested an audience of the Emperor. As I saw him daily and always accompanied him wherever he went, he seemed astonished at my formal request, and, granting it immediately, commented:

“Well, what is the urgency? Anything out of the ordinary?” he said.

My observations on the dangers of a protracted sojourn at Moscow, and of the winter, if we marched during the cold, were received most graciously, though at the moment they evoked no reply or hint which could give me any indication of his intentions.

“Caulaincourt is already half-frozen,” he said to Duroc and the Prince of Neuchâtel, when telling them what I had done.

The Prince and the Viceroy had themselves submitted to the Emperor all the inconveniences and even dangers that would arise from a more prolonged stay in Moscow. The carelessness and negligence of our troops in looking after themselves added to the misfortunes of our situation, and I have no doubt that the Emperor saw and thought as we did. But the difficulty of getting out of his embarrassing position gave fresh food to his hopes of entering into negotiations and held him a prisoner in the Kremlin.

Some time about September 24th, the Mojaisk road being entirely cut out by a corps of Russian dragoons and Cossacks, the Emperor sent some squadrons of chasseurs and dragoons of the Guard, and they had several skirmishes with the Russian cavalry. Our dragoons, having pushed a successful charge too far, were surrounded by superior forces and obliged to yield.<sup>1</sup> Major Marthod,<sup>2</sup> a few officers, some dragoons and part of two squadrons were taken prisoners. Although the utmost bravery had been shown, this slight reverse suffered by the Guard corps irritated the Emperor as much as the loss of a battle; but it must be remembered that at the time this incident made more impression than the loss of fifty general officers at the battle of the Moskowa.

Other points on the Smolensk road were similarly intercepted by enemy parties, with the result that all certain communication with France was cut off. Wilna, Warsaw, Mayence, Paris were no longer in daily receipt of their orders from the sovereign master of the Great Empire. In Moscow the Emperor waited in vain for despatches from his ministers, reports from his governors, news from Europe. From a glance at our faces one might have thought that the possibility of such an interruption had never been even contemplated. It was all right to have to fight in order to get a crust of bread, to risk being taken prisoner for the sake of a truss of hay, to

<sup>1</sup> This incident occurred in the night of September 25th-26th, near Malo-Wiasma. See above, p. 281.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Ignace Marthod, born at Chambéry, November 7, 1771. Since January 5, 1809, colonel. He was major of the Dragoons of the Imperial Guard. He died in captivity, October 5, 1812.

run the chance of being frozen to death by staying in Russia; everyone was familiar with such possibilities—or rather probabilities; but the idea that an expected letter from France might not arrive had entered nobody's mind. General de Saint-Sulpice<sup>1</sup> was sent with a body of mounted Guard and re-established our communications.

At the end of this month so rashly passed in Moscow, the French Army was composed of an active force of 95,000 men. The infantry of the Old Guard was about 5000 strong; the Young Guard about 10,000; the cavalry of the Guard 4000; the cavalry of the army from 10,000 to 15,000. Of the 500 guns that the army still possessed, more than half might have been limbered up. The hospitals in Moscow held 15,000 Frenchmen, and those of Mojaisk the men who had been badly wounded at the Moskowa. Work continually went on to put the Kremlin into a state of defence. During the early days of October ten guns were already in place and the monasteries round the city loopholed.

Although the Emperor had by now almost determined to leave Moscow, the grave political considerations that held him there also prevented him from taking any of the measures necessary to ensure his retreat. He thought that his declared intention of passing the winter in Moscow and organizing the surrounding country would alarm the enemy and make them more disposed to treat, and this was what the Emperor naturally desired above all else. By action as well as by word of mouth, he sought to convince everybody of this.

Being desirous of sending to Paris some trophies of his sojourn in Moscow, he made inquiries as to what should be sent to France as tokens of the success of his arms.<sup>2</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> Raymond Gaspard de Bonardi de Saint-Sulpice, born at Paris, December 23, 1761, died June 20, 1835. He was General of Brigade, March 24, 1803, General of Division, February 14, 1807.

<sup>2</sup> "These trophies comprised various curious objects found in the Kremlin, among others the flags taken from the Turks by the Russians over a hundred years earlier, some ancient armour, a madonna which the devout had enriched with diamonds, and the gilded cross from the belfry of Ivan Veliki which had so long dominated all the domes of Moscow." (Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 149.)

visited every part of the Kremlin himself, as well as the church of Ivan Veliki and the other church alongside it.

The Poles had always mentioned the church of Ivan Veliki as being the object of the Russians' devotion, and even superstition. The iron cross<sup>1</sup> surmounting the belfry, the Emperor was told, was venerated by all the Orthodox, so he gave orders that it should be taken down. The difficulty was to do this, as no workmen could be found to climb to such a height. The Prince of Neuchâtel, like everyone else, was reluctant to deprive an already ruined city of part of the sole monument left intact within its walls. The Emperor repeated his order, and specially charged the Sappers of the Guard with the execution of it. From that moment there could be no more talk of difficulties, but the cross, partly dismounted, was not so much taken down as dropped to the ground.<sup>2</sup> To this iron cross were added various objects which were believed to be used at the coronations of the Tsars, and two old cannon asked for by the Poles, as having formerly been taken from them by the Russians. But the cannon remained in position, for, as not one horse was left in the whole country to replace our own losses, and we had not enough to harness our artillery, we could not spare any for taking away trophies. So the Poles contented themselves with some old standards which the Russians had formerly captured from them and had left in the arsenal.

At Moscow, negotiations advanced no further than before. Our position on the Dwina had been made more difficult by the retreat we had been forced to make after Marshal Saint-

<sup>1</sup> As far as I can recollect, a Russian proclamation that had been shown to the Emperor, or some report that he had received, spoke of the cross of Ivan Veliki as one of the sacred objects in the hands of the enemy, the recovery of which should be the first aim of all the faithful. This fixed the Emperor's determination. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

<sup>2</sup> "Part of the dome of the Kremlin was demolished and the cross of Iwanowich (*sic*); it was broken in falling." (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 170.) "One of the cables of the crane broke at a

Cyr had been wounded and Wittgenstein had received reinforcements.<sup>1</sup> The position could only be aggravated by the imminent appearance at our rear of the Army of Moldavia, which the Emperor estimated at no more than three divisions, making 20,000.<sup>2</sup> Their destination was not known, and the Emperor worried little about it at the time;<sup>3</sup> for he thought that Kutusoff, as Commander-in-Chief, who had been forced on the Tsar by party tactics, was too anxious to maintain his own credit by his own personal successes not to keep all his

critical moment. The equilibrium was lost, the weight of the chains dragged down the cross and part of the scaffolding. The ground was shaken by the enormous weight of this falling mass, and the cross was broken into three pieces." (Peyrusse, *Mémorial et Archives*, 1869, 106.)

<sup>1</sup> Caulaincourt is anticipating events. After the first battle of Polotsk (August 16th and 17th), Oudinot, being wounded, passed over the command of the 2nd Corps to Gouvion Saint-Cyr, who was in command of the 6th Corps (Bavarian). The Russians had withdrawn behind the Drissa, and the two armies faced one another for a couple of months without anything of importance occurring. It was not until October 18th and 19th, at the same moment that Moscow was being evacuated, that Wittgenstein, reinforced by the 12,000 Swedes under General Steinheil, fought the second battle of Polotsk, in the course of which Gouvion Saint-Cyr was wounded by a bullet in the left foot. After the loss of Polotsk the 6th Corps retired on Gloubokoje and the 2nd on Tcharniki, to join up with Victor. It is superfluous to add that Napoleon could have had no knowledge of these events before he left Moscow.

<sup>2</sup> As noted above, the Army of Moldavia, 35,000 strong, commanded by Tchitchagoff, had joined Tormasov in the neighbourhood of Lourds on September 18th, and the two armies having thus united, it compelled Schwarzenberg to recross the Bug in October.

<sup>3</sup> Napoleon to Berthier, Moscow, October 6, 1812 (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19258): "The Russian Army of Moldavia, of a strength of three divisions, or of 20,000 men including infantry, cavalry and artillery, crossed the Dnieper (?) early in September. It is possibly going to Moscow to reinforce the army commanded by General Kutusoff, or to Wolhynia to reinforce Tormasov's army."

best troops with his own army.<sup>1</sup> But as our position grew worse, the Emperor decided to call up his reserves from the Niemen, and on the 6th ordered the Duke of Belluno, who had crossed that river on September 4th, to concert with the Duke of Bassano at Wilna.<sup>2</sup> The Duke of Bassano possessed the Emperor's entire confidence, and had the direction as well as the knowledge of all that was going on, and was thus in a position to give the Duke of Belluno the fullest information, and all the private and political details which could not be communicated in despatches.

The Major-General instructed the Duke of Belluno to proceed between Orcha and Smolensk in such a manner as to cover Wilna, and to act as reserve to Saint-Cyr if he was forced to Polotsk, to Schwarzenberg if he was pressed by Tormasov, and even to the Grand Army of Moscow,<sup>3</sup> in case of need. In addition to his three divisions,<sup>4</sup> he had under his orders Dombrowski with at least 6000 infantry and 12,000

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon showed clear foresight. On several occasions Kutusoff ordered Tchitchagoff to rejoin him, but the first of these orders was not delivered at its destination until after the union with Tormasov, and the second when the action against Schwarzenberg was already started. A third order, of September 27th, was not obeyed either. (Cf. Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, 125.)

<sup>2</sup> On July 4th, Victor, who commanded the 9th Corps, received instructions to move from Berlin to Marienburg; on July 22nd to go to Tilsit, and on September 4th to Minsk. Eventually, on September 11th, Napoleon ordered the 9th Corps to make for Smolensk. In pursuance of Napoleon's orders to Berthier, October 6, 1812 (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19258), Victor received the order to quarter his corps between Smolensk and Orcha. By this letter of October 6th the Emperor ordered the Duke of Belluno "to maintain a close correspondence by means of couriers with the Duke of Bassano, so that that minister could write to him and impart all the news from different quarters."

<sup>3</sup> This role of General of Reserves is specified in the despatches of October 6th from Napoleon to Berthier, quoted above.

<sup>4</sup> The 12th Division (General Partouneaux), the 26th Division (General Daendels), and the 28th Division (General Girard).

Polish cavalry formed from new levies in the neighbourhood of Minsk,<sup>1</sup> and the Westphalian brigade from Wilna.<sup>2</sup>

At the same time the 32nd Infantry Division, formed in part of Germans, was being organized at Warsaw under the orders of General Durutte<sup>3</sup> and the 34th, under General Loison, was ordered to leave Königsberg for Wilna.<sup>4</sup> All our forces were being collected and echeloned to support us and make a front against the dangers that might menace our rear.

The Duke of Belluno left General Baraguay d'Hilliers at Smolensk,<sup>5</sup> and, in consequence of what had happened on the

<sup>1</sup> Jean Honoré Dombrowski, born at Warsaw, August 29, 1755, died there June 6, 1818. He entered the service of France in 1796, was gazetted General of Division February 10, 1800. In 1812 he commanded the 17th Division (5th Army Corps under Poniatowski, or Poles).

<sup>2</sup> This reserve brigade was actually composed of the 4th Westphalian Regiment, the two Hesse-Darmstadt battalions, and eight guns. The two Hesse battalions were not to join until the end of October.

<sup>3</sup> General Pierre François Joseph Durutte, born at Douai, July 14, 1767, died April 18, 1827. He became General of Division, August 27, 1803. This 32nd Division was composed of the regiments from Walcheren, Bellisle and the Mediterranean.

<sup>4</sup> General Louis Henri Loison, born at Damvillers (Meuse), May 13, 1771, died at Stockel (Belgium), November 30, 1816. General of Division, October 19, 1799, he was appointed Governor of Königsberg, July 6, 1812, in place of Hogendorp, and the same day he received orders to form a division of six Saxon battalions, two battalions from the Vistula, two Westphalian battalions, and the regiment of Saxon Light Cavalry.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Baraguay d'Hilliers, father of the soldier who was Marshal under the Second Empire, was born in Paris, August 13, 1764. He was promoted General of Division, March 10, 1797, and appointed Governor of Smolensk, August 27, 1812. On November 9th a division under his command was beaten and the Augereau brigade, which formed part of it, compelled to surrender. This was the first time in the 1812 campaign that a French detachment had capitulated. Napoleon was furious. He sent Baraguay back to Königsberg and ordered an inquiry. The General died of chagrin, January 6, 1813.

Dwina, took command of the corps<sup>1</sup> which General Legrand had refused after Saint-Cyr was wounded, and which General Merle<sup>2</sup> had taken slowly to Tcharniki, despite the superior forces of the enemy who dared not press him. There he joined the Duke of Belluno,<sup>3</sup> who had reached Smolensk on the 26th. This Marshal thus united under his command the 2nd, 6th and 9th Corps; the 2nd and 9th alone making more than 36,000 men.

Letters from Prince Schwarzenberg, dated at the end of September, gave confirmation of the march of the Army of Moldavia, which, he said, was intended to reinforce the corps opposed to him, but for reasons which I have indicated above, the Emperor doubted the genuineness of this movement.

He urged his army on the Dwina to take the offensive, but wrong directions given to two divisions caused the failure of operations planned for the 30th, and Wittgenstein profited by this to drive us beyond the Lukomlia.<sup>4</sup>

On Lauriston's return the Emperor spoke to me of his mission, and on this occasion discussed matters in a friendly tone to which I was unaccustomed.

"The Emperor Alexander is stubborn," he said. "He will regret it. Never again will he be able to obtain such good terms as I would have made now. He has done himself such harm by burning his towns and his capital that there is nothing more I should have asked of him. He would have to pay no dearer price than the confiscation of the English shipping. If the Poles do not rise *en masse* to defend themselves against the Russians, France has sacrificed enough for them, if I can come to a conclusion and make peace, at the same time looking after their particular interests. I am going to attack Kutusoff."

<sup>1</sup> The 2nd Corps, reinforced by the 6th, repulsed at Polotsk October 19th.

<sup>2</sup> General Merle had previously commanded the 9th Division. General Legrand retained the command of the 6th Division.

<sup>3</sup> The junction of these corps was effected October 29th.

<sup>4</sup> Victor attacked Wittgenstein at Tcharniki on October 31st, but he was obliged to withdraw on Sienno and Czerija, which he reached on November 6th.

If I beat him, as is probable, the Tsar runs grave risks. He can stop it to-day by a word. Who can tell what will happen in the forthcoming campaign? I have money, and more men than I need. I am about to get six thousand Cossacks; in the next campaign I shall have fifteen thousand. I am experienced in this war; my army will have experience of the country and the troops confronting them. These are incalculable advantages. If I make my winter quarters here and at Kalouga, even at Smolensk or at Witepsk, Russia will be lost. Having made here, as at Osterode,<sup>1</sup> all the sacrifices that I can be expected to make, nothing is left but for me to pursue the interests of my system, of the great political aim which I set out to attain. If the Tsar would only reflect, he would realize that this might take him far with a man of my character, who will now have nothing more to do with him, as he has made no reply to any of my overtures. You were right," added the Emperor, "in not accepting this mission; you would have made them listen to reason."

I answered him, as on other occasions, that I should have met with no better hearing than M. Lauriston. I added that Kutusoff, burdened with heavy responsibilities, might be anxious to enter into negotiations to the end that he might extricate himself from his difficulties as soon as possible, but that I doubted whether he was authorized to do so; moreover, that all these fine phrases might merely be a sort of game to foster our hopes of a speedy settlement: in other words, to lull the Emperor into a false sense of security while he was in Moscow, since at Petersburg they realized their advantages and our difficulties.

At the words "lull" and "difficulties" the Emperor gave a start.

"What do you call our difficulties?" he asked, with an air of irritation.

But collecting himself at once, he asked with visible emotion what I actually meant by "our difficulties."

"The winter, Sire," I answered, "is a big difficulty, to

<sup>1</sup> February 21 to March 31, 1807. An allusion to the offers of alliance made to Russia before the Friedland campaign.

begin with. The lack of stores, of horses for your artillery, of transport for your sick and wounded, the poor clothing for your soldiers. Every man must have a sheepskin, stout fur-lined gloves, a cap with ear-flaps, warm boot-socks, heavy boots to keep his feet from getting frost-bitten. You lack all this. Not a single frost-nail has been forged for the horses' shoes; how are they going to draw the guns? There is no end to what I could tell Your Majesty on this subject. Then there are your communications; the weather is still fine, but what will it be in a month, in a fortnight, perhaps in even less?"

The Emperor listened. I perceived that it was with impatience, but at least he let me speak. This time, it seemed to me, what I said with thoughts of retreat in my mind, irritated him no less than my words "lull" and "difficulties," and he was above all upset at having been found out.

"So you think I am leaving Moscow?" he demanded.

"Yes, Sire."

"That is not certain. Nowhere shall I be better off than in Moscow."

Whereupon he entered into particulars of the advantages that the city still offered by reason of the buildings yet standing, which in his opinion made it preferable to any other place. He discussed the need of provisioning, of the resources still to be found within its walls, and those already obtained. Nevertheless he went in detail into the difficulties of provisioning caused by the presence of the Cossacks; but these difficulties would be the same anywhere, so long as he had no Polish Cossacks to pit against the Russian Cossacks. He concluded by saying that, apart from the great political advantages presented by a sojourn in Moscow, the place was preferable on many grounds, if only by reason of the buildings, surviving the fire. As to the Cossack attacks, he said he had means of obviating this annoyance by placing detachments of infantry in blockhouses linked in a line of defence, and added that, after giving battle to Kutusoff and driving him further back, he would see to the organization of all this. He agreed that it was vexatious to have his communications disturbed, even at the very gates of headquarters, and that from this point of

view it would be to our advantage to be nearer Smolensk, and thereby nearer his other corps, his supplies and reserves, while the enemy would be correspondingly weakened by being drawn away from the bases they had formed. But he observed that as this question involved both political and military aspects, all considerations had to be carefully weighed before taking any decision, and he seemed to me to be inclined to staying in Moscow.

The Emperor continually reverted to the use he would make of the Polish Cossacks in the winter; they would be supported by his infantry posts in the blockhouses and so afford a measure of tranquillity for the army. This was his favourite idea. As it was only possible to conclude peace at Moscow, he discussed all the means essential to his remaining in the city, like a man who, being convinced that a certain step is advantageous and even necessary, and having given the matter much thought, feels that it is possible, persuades himself of its feasibility, and seeks to persuade others. On this hypothesis he spoke of establishing the army at Kalouga, of an extensive operation on that town while Moscow was left in the hands of a garrison, at least until it could be seen what the Russian Army was going to do. He complained of the slowness in raising the Polish levies, of M. de Pradt who did nothing and did not represent him, who was inconsiderate, and whose meanness and lack of tact had mishandled all the affairs of Warsaw.<sup>1</sup>

"If I had sent Talleyrand," he added, "I should have my six thousand Cossacks, and my position would at once look different."

He attributed all his difficulties simply to the trouble caused by the Cossacks, for he had more troops than were necessary, he insisted, to fight Kutusoff and go wherever he liked.

The hardships of winter, the total lack of all precautions against cold, etc., did not enter into his calculations.

"You do not know the French," he said to me. "They

<sup>1</sup> Napoleon wrote to Maret from Molodetchna, December 4, 1812 (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19372). "The ambassador Pradt has shown no ability whatsoever, nor even the slightest common

will get all they need; one thing will take the place of another."

He ridiculed my observations as to shoeing the horses, asserting that our artillery and cavalry officers, and our shoeing-smiths were just as good at their job as the Russians. Several times, however, he referred to the advantage of getting in closer touch with his corps on the Dwina, but principally from the point of view of giving them an impetus which he was unable to impart from a distance. He complained that the Generals had not made the best of the means at their disposal.

The Emperor seemed to speak with confidence, even without restraint. With the exception of the Duke of Dalmatia and Marshal Saint-Cyr, none of the Generals, according to him, was capable of leading an army of 30,000 men.

"The Tsar Alexander," he said, "is to some extent better served than myself, for although Wittgenstein has made several blunders he has often out-manoeuvred the Generals opposed to him. The Duke of Reggio is brave enough on the battlefield, but he is a mediocre General, the most incapable there is. Saint-Cyr is a better type of man, but hide-bound; he will see nothing but what is before his eyes, whereas in a system of great operations such as these everything must be worked into its proper place."

He concluded by assuring me, in a tone of conviction, that Petersburg would reply, and that in any event Kutusoff would conclude an armistice with Lauriston. This being so, he would lose all the advantages he had gained if he left Moscow, and might even prevent any reply being sent or any results obtained. To evacuate Moscow would be a confession of defeat, whereas he had been victorious in every direction. He added that the Tsar would think twice before letting him pass the winter in Moscow, whence he would be able to organize the country, for the occupation of the capital was no small matter for the Russian nobility, who were thereby deprived of their revenues while the refugee peasants were eating up the provinces to which they had drifted. The Russians could not endure this state of affairs for long;

Kutusoff and his Generals knew very well that they desired peace, and these considerations prevented him from attacking Kutusoff at the moment. Anyhow, the weather was so fine that he would make his decision in some days.

"The extreme rigours of our winter do not come on in twenty-four hours," he said. "Although we are less acclimatized than the Russians, we are fundamentally more robust. We have not had autumn yet, we shall have plenty of fine days before winter sets in."

"Do not trust to that, Sire," I answered. "Winter will come like a bombshell, and you cannot be too apprehensive considering the present state of the army."

This conversation shows all too clearly the Emperor's hopes, desires and wishes; it would be superfluous to add further details. His motive for remaining in Moscow is clear, and even why he did not immediately attack the Russian Army, which he had to defeat before undertaking any operation. He must have counted confidently on making peace, or at least on concluding an armistice, for he was aware that the Russians were receiving strong reinforcements and recovering their morale, while innumerable petty matters and the interruptions of our communications were weakening our own. It is positive, and the Emperor never varied on this point, that he was determined to attack the Russians, whether he had to withdraw, or whether he had to take up his winter quarters in Moscow or elsewhere. Victorious, he leaned towards keeping Moscow; beaten, or having won an indecisive victory, he considered it indispensable to beat Kutusoff, and felt that he was in a position to hold Smolensk. All his calculations, all his discussions with the Prince of Neuchâtel before the skirmish at Winkovo, were based on this opinion. It even seemed that the more he reflected the more he clung to Moscow. Three weeks earlier he had perhaps been more inclined to quit the city than he was now.

I will summarize the points of the great question of the moment, for it was of the utmost importance.

The Emperor laboured under an illusion as to the rigour of the winter and the consequences of spending it in Russia. He

was convinced that by installing infantry posts and palisaded blockhouses, he could obviate the annoyance of Cossack attacks, whether on our line or at our rear, and he cited as an example what had been done to ensure communications in the Vendée campaign and the Chouan insurrection. He thought that the corps on the Dwina were more than sufficient to hold Wittgenstein, and even, in case of need, to cope with other circumstances by means of the reinforcements they would receive. He thought likewise about the corps at Smolensk and Schwarzenberg's Army. The great number of troops coming up from Wilna and France seemed to him more than adequate to safeguard his rear against all the Russian corps, and adequate even to supply reinforcements. He regarded the Army of Moldavia as small in numbers, and destined principally to reinforce Kutusoff who, as Commander-in-Chief, and especially as head of a faction which the trend of events was continually strengthening, would not fail to gather reinforcements and maintain the influence that was his by reason of successes and a good position. In the event of not meeting with the success he anticipated in his attack on Kutusoff, the Emperor considered himself in a fit state to keep the field, and imagined that the temperature would allow him to do so for some time yet.

The Emperor always considered it a matter of prime importance that he should remain in Moscow, from a material point of view on account of the establishments there, and politically because the occupation of the Capital produced a moral effect that would be felt in Europe as much as in Russia. Should circumstances and causes of which he would barely admit the possibility oblige him to abandon Moscow, in no event did he contemplate retiring further than Witepsk; and this he imagined that he would be able to do easily before the rigours of winter set in. He intended to make no movement without having previously beaten Kutusoff; but should he decide to retire on Witepsk he wanted at the same time to arrange everything in Moscow, so that if necessary the winter could be passed there, and so that he could retain the means of keeping the place if he decided to hold that line. In the event

of a withdrawal, he considered that he would have time and the means to withdraw the Moscow garrison when he wished to do so.

Such was the reasoning upon which the Emperor based his conduct and his prolonged stay in Moscow, waiting for a reply which never came, and could not come.

It was, I think, about October 12th that a courier bound for Paris was captured. The next day the one coming from Paris suffered the same fate. Fortunately these were the only couriers we lost during the entire campaign. Several were delayed, but thanks to the intelligence shown by the men chosen for this service they escaped the activities of the Russian scouts. The Cossacks appreciated so little the importance of this correspondence that after emptying the portmanteaux and the two portfolios in each, in search of money, they threw away and scattered all the papers. A number of these were recovered. The army post lost three trunks of letters, only one of them from France. Most of these letters were found.

All these incidents worried the Emperor more than a great reverse would have done in other circumstances. Still nursing his favourite idea, and without considering that his repeated overtures only offered fresh evidence to the enemy of his embarrassed position, and consequently only one more reason why they should make no reply, he thought of sending Lauriston once more to Marshal Kutusoff to conclude an armistice upon which he could rely. By this means he hoped to hasten the reply which he so persistently expected from Petersburg.

All went in the best possible way with the Russians, who took every care to prolong the Emperor's fatal sense of security and foster his hopes of reaching some settlement.<sup>1</sup> In addition to conciliatory speeches and the repeated assertion that they were more eager for peace than we were, that this desire, voiced by the army, had been communicated to the Tsar, and that the expected reply could not be long delayed, nor other

<sup>1</sup> Report from Kutusoff to the Tsar Alexander at this time, includes the following curious phrase about the aggressors, as he called the French: "Their graves are already dug for them in the soil of this Empire." (*Caulaincourt's note.*)

than satisfactory when it came, they had by a series of parleys established a sort of tacit armistice so as to hoodwink the King of Naples of their intentions. Even the detached parties had been less active for some days. Everything concurred to blind the King's eyes, so that he did not retire as he had been authorized to do, into Woronovo.<sup>1</sup>

Since October 3rd our troops had been ordered to concentrate, and on the 15th or 16th the Emperor seemed inclined to evacuate Moscow and move his headquarters to Witepsk, keeping Smolensk as an advanced post or, perhaps, as headquarters if he did not deem it necessary to establish himself at Witepsk to be nearer the Dwina. He complained more bitterly than ever that the King of Naples was losing his cavalry. On the evening of the 14th, he ordered him to make ready for a possible attack on Kutusoff, and relying on details the King had supplied as to the state of the cavalry, daily losses, and the difficulty of finding provisions, he authorized him to take up his position at Woronovo for the time being, as he would there be covered by infantry. But the tacit armistice which had existed for some days decided the King, as I have said above, to stay where he was.

Berthier imagined that the Emperor's decision was taken, and told me so. On the whole, the Emperor seemed to have made up his mind to follow the Bieloi road,<sup>2</sup> which was intact. This would have the added advantage of shortening the distance by several marches, and would have enabled the army to be established before any attacks were made; for with his small corps, composed almost entirely of cavalry, Wittgenstein could not cause us any trouble without himself being wiped out.

But the Emperor soon abandoned this wise project. He said that to ensure the army being left undisturbed, and to influence public opinion, it was necessary to force back Kutusoff and defeat him before making any retrograde

<sup>1</sup> Murat had taken up his position at Winkowo, behind the Tchernitchnia, an hour's distance from Taroutino where Kutusoff was placed, to the south of Moscow.

<sup>2</sup> The road north of that by which he had come.

movement or settling into winter quarters. According to the Emperor this was the only way to prevent the enemy from harassing us, at least for some time. If the Emperor Alexander would not consider the question of peace, any other movement on the part of the French would aggravate rather than improve their situation, for if they retired without defeating Kutusoff he would probably follow them up in contact with Wittgenstein, and augment the moral effect which this withdrawal of the French would produce on the Russians. To defeat Kutusoff, either in a pitched battle or in detail, seemed to Napoleon, all things considered, an *indispensable preliminary* to any retrograde movement, if only for the blow it would strike at Russian opinion before going into winter quarters. This decision, which offered the chance of battle and glory, as well as affording a pretext for waiting some days longer for the reply from Petersburg which he had so much at heart and which never arrived, was definitely taken and resolved upon.

Meanwhile the Emperor once again sent Lauriston to Russian headquarters to propose an armistice, and to ascertain whether any reply had come from Petersburg.<sup>1</sup> The King of Naples was instructed to forward Lauriston's despatches as rapidly as possible, for the Emperor awaited them with all the more impatience in that he realized that the season was passing, and consequently his own arrangements demanded a prompt reply. The Prince of Neuchâtel wrote in this sense to Kutusoff on the 16th, urging him to handle the war so as to keep the country in hand rather than devastate it.<sup>2</sup> He

<sup>1</sup> Lauriston left Moscow during the evening of October 16th. (*Castellane, Journal*, I, 170.)

<sup>2</sup> See Berthier's letter to Kutusoff, dated from Moscow, October 18, 1812, in the *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19277. The exact phrase is: "General Lauriston has been charged to propose to Your Highness that arrangements should be come to that would give to the war a character conformable to the established rules of warfare, and ensure measures that shall minimize the evils the country must suffer to those inevitable to a state of war." This letter, dated the 18th (not the 16th, as Caulaincourt says), was taken to Kutusoff's headquarters by Colonel Berthemy.

proposed certain measures to this end. On the 21st, after his success at Woronovo [Winkovo], Marshal Kutusoff replied "that a people that has not seen an enemy on their soil for three centuries is unable to make the distinction which frequent occupations and familiarity with the customs of modern warfare have established in civilized nations."<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor considered this a worthy reply, and after reading it, observed:

"These people have no wish to treat for terms. Kutusoff is courteous because he wants to finish the war, but Alexander has no such desire. He is pig-headed."

The King of Naples had already proposed this armistice desired by the Russian generals, and only refused by them because the Tsar had not authorised it. It was on this occasion that the Tsar remarked, on receiving the despatches and proposals from headquarters:

"Now is the moment when my campaign opens."

Some days later (after the affair of Woronovo) it was learned from the Russians that the Tsar had expressly forbidden the Marshal and his generals to consent to any armistice or cessation of hostilities.<sup>2</sup> Lauriston came back on the 16th or 17th,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kutusoff's reply to Berthier, dated October 9-21, 1812, is given by Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, 222. The actual words are: "I must, however, emphasize a truth of which Your Highness will undoubtedly realize the force and scope: this is, that it is difficult, however keenly one may desire to do so, to stop a nation that is embittered by all that it sees, a people who, for three hundred years have never known war within their frontiers, who are ready to immolate themselves for their country, and who are not susceptible to those distinctions of what is or what is not the usage of ordinary warfare."

<sup>2</sup> Alexander's letter to Kutusoff in reply to Prince Wolkonsky's mission to Petersburg with the proposals transmitted by Lauriston, is dated from Petersburg, October 9-21, 1812. This letter is given by Fain, *Manuscrit de 1812*, II, 224. It concludes by emphasizing that for the moment no proposal from the enemy can bind Alexander "to bring the war to an end and thus turn him from his sacred duty of avenging his injured country."

<sup>3</sup> Lauriston returned to Moscow on the evening of the 17th. (Castellane, *Journal*, I, 171.)

while Kutusoff was preparing for the surprise of the 18th which was so cruelly to open everyone's eyes.

All this time our communications were daily becoming more difficult to maintain. Without actually operating near the army the Cossacks impeded our movements in Moscow. A fresh convoy of artillery from France lost several ammunition wagons after leaving Mojaisk. The Cossacks blew up several; the others were recaptured. Some days previously the Emperor had given orders that the various corps should be issued with rations and biscuits for fifteen days, as though there were any means of transport to enable this to be done! He knew that there could be no means available, for even all the private carriages had been taken to serve in the convoy of wounded led by General Nansouty. This order of his caused much grumbling, and was only partially carried out. Several corps had not enough flour to fulfil such a demand. All the guns and ammunition that could be transported were parked in the Kremlin. These dispositions left no further doubt as to a move in the near future. Most people, counting on the Emperor's characteristic tenacity of purpose were convinced that he was about to attack Kutusoff at Kalouga. Some of us, but a minority, thought it portended a retreat on Smolensk.

While searching for food and wine some soldiers discovered cellars in which a prodigious quantity of furs had been concealed, and all who could afford it bought them. The bear-skins were too costly for junior officers,<sup>1</sup> but I purchased one for a few napoleons.

By October 18th everything was ready to move on Kalouga on the 20th. The Emperor had decided to leave part of his Household at Moscow.<sup>2</sup> He had given me instructions when, at one in the afternoon, as he was holding a review after the

<sup>1</sup> This phrase is employed to distinguish an officer in command of a single unit from a general officer, or one commanding a collection of troops.

<sup>2</sup> See *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19286, for the Emperor's orders to Mortier, who was to remain at Moscow with the Delaborde Division of the Young Guard, the Carrère Brigade, and some artillery.

parade,<sup>1</sup> he received news of the King of Naples's defeat at Winkovo. The Emperor immediately determined to press forward his own movements and advanced everything by a day.<sup>2</sup> The entire Household and all his carriages were ordered to start, and even as many of the sick as could be moved were included. The Emperor's first words to the Prince of Neuchâtel and to those to whom he issued orders in person were:

"We must wipe out the effects of this surprise. It must not be said in France that a check like this has forced us to retire. What folly of the King! No one takes proper care. This upsets all our plans; it spoils everything. The honour of our arms must be re-established on the battlefield. We will see if the Russians carry matters off there as they did in this surprise. Anyhow, it looks as if the King has done them some damage, for they dare not follow him. In any event, we must march to his help and avenge him."

The King had lost several pieces of artillery, a number of excellent and gallant officers had been killed,<sup>3</sup> others taken prisoner and many wounded. He lost a number of men taken prisoner, and the greater part of his own carriages and those of his army corps.

During the evening the Emperor communicated to us the following particulars.

As usual, our troops took no precautions, and reconnaissances were made carelessly. Having observed for some time our habits and the line of our march, the Russians harassed our troops even less than usual while preparing the surprise that was to prove so fatal. By the appointed day they had collected several divisions in readiness for the projected operation. Cossacks, artillery and infantry were concealed in woods, very near our position but not properly examined by

<sup>1</sup> At noon the Emperor reviewed Ney's 3rd Corps. The news of the battle at Winkovo was brought him by Béranger, aide-de-camp to the King of Naples.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19284, Napoleon to Berthier, Moscow, October 18, 1812.

<sup>3</sup> Notably General Dery, Murat's aide-de-camp, and the Polish General Fiszer, Chief of the Staff of the 5th Corps (Poniatowski).

our scouts.<sup>1</sup> Supported by Bagowouth's Corps,<sup>2</sup> Platow seized the moment when the greater part of our men were out foraging, and his brisk attack on Sébastiani's camp threw us into such disorder that the artillery carriages and a large number of men were taken. In the first moments of excitement, indeed, great difficulty was experienced in rallying even small companies in the various regiments. During the preceding day and night the whole Russian Army had crossed the Nara over bridges built a league above Tatoutino. Bagowouth, whose infantry had made their way into our bivouacs, firing on our brave lads as they ran to their horses to join their companions, was supported by Strogonoff and backed up by Ostermann, and together they made for the defile<sup>3</sup> which was the only line of retreat for the French. It would have been the end of Sébastiani and all the artillery if the King of Naples, at the head of the Carabiniers, had not hurled himself on the Russians and stopped their column. Taken by surprise, in his turn, Bagowouth, who had no help from Strogonoff or Ostermann, who advanced slowly instead of dashing to the head of the defile, was obliged to halt and reform his men. A pitched battle ensued, and this gave the King time to pass the defile, and once order was established, to engage in a battle which ended in even honours. Platow, who for a time had made himself master of the defile, was not supported and was driven off by Claparède<sup>4</sup> and Latour-Maubourg.<sup>5</sup> Bagowouth was killed.

The King carried out his retreat in good order and without annoyance from the Russians, of whom only a few corps had crossed the Tchernitchnia. Kutusoff had only intended this skirmish to be one of outposts, a snatched advantage. Having obtained it, he contained himself with this small success and

<sup>1</sup> The attack was made at five o'clock in the morning.

<sup>2</sup> Bagowouth commanded the Russian 2nd Corps.

<sup>3</sup> From Spaskaplia, two leagues behind the French lines.

<sup>4</sup> General Claparede commanded the Vistula Division of the Imperial Guard.

<sup>5</sup> Commanding the 4th Cavalry Corps.

did not trouble to risk his advantage for greater things. Unwilling to run the hazards of a battle, he halted and resumed his position on the Nara, leaving only Platow, supported by some regular troops, to pursue the King of Naples. With soldiers of different calibre, serving under a different chief, few of our men would have escaped. Prodigies of valour were performed.

To the particulars of this affair just given, I will add certain details narrated to us by the Emperor as to Kutusoff's position, together with Napoleon's reflections on the various reports that he received.

Kutusoff remained in his position behind what were known as the Entrenchments of Taroutino, or rather behind the Nara and the Istia. The Entrenchments of Taroutino were doubtless so-called because they guarded the bridge in the village of Taroutino where the road crossed the Nara. The King of Naples occupied Winkowo with the Claparède Division and a line of posts on the Tchernitchnia, a small river, or rather stream. To right and left were the cavalry, Poniatowski on the left, slightly in the rear, Sébastiani in the first line, Saint-Germain with his reserve,<sup>1</sup> in the second line, Dufour's infantry<sup>2</sup> and Latour-Maubourg's Cavalry also in reserve.

The Emperor blamed the King, and especially General Sébastiani who had suffered the surprise, for not having sent outposts or continual patrols into the small wood that dominated the position at General Sébastiani's right, for it was from this position that the Russians, more alert and active than ourselves on this occasion, were able, as the Emperor said, to observe all Sébastiani's movements, even what went on in his own quarters.

The Emperor was all the more displeased that he should have to blame his generals for having been taken by surprise, because this same place had been attacked by the Cossacks early in October and from the same wood; this, he considered,

<sup>1</sup> 1st Division of Heavy Cavalry (1st Cavalry Corps).

<sup>2</sup> General François Marie Dufour, born at Fruges (Pas-de-Calais), December 5, 1769, died at Lille, April 14, 1815. He was General of Brigade, January 19, 1807, General of Division, March 4, 1813, and Commanded a Brigade of Ney's 3rd Corps.

should not have escaped the notice of those in command. The Emperor did not fail to reproach himself for having stayed in Moscow without inspecting this position.

"It means that I must see everything with my own eyes," he said. "I cannot rely upon the King. He trusts in his own bravery; he leaves things to his generals and they are careless. The King performs prodigies of valour. Without his presence of mind and courage everything would have been lost and himself jeopardized had the Russians been better led. Bagowouth was not backed up in his vigorous attack. Strogonoff spoiled the whole operation by wavering, and by being too far off at the decisive moment."

If this surprise attack was proof of our lack of watchfulness, the way we fought, although far fewer in numbers, must have shown the Russians that fatigue and privations had by no means diminished our courage. Cavalry and artillery were alike worn out; the horses were kept alive only on what could be obtained by somewhat aimless foraging at a distance, and every day this became harder and more dangerous, as the men were obliged to go further afield. The King had, it is true, at least a hundred guns, but they were badly horsed and weakly manned.

The Emperor was greatly annoyed by this affair, above all by the losses suffered by the cavalry, who were already so much reduced in strength. It also made a very lively impression on the army. The entire success of the enemy was attributed to the Cossacks, whose activities engaged only too much of our attention. Our men were doubtless very brave, but they were careless and lacking in vigilance, which arose as much from their character as from lack of order and discipline. This was frequently the subject of serious reflection on the part of the Prince of Neuchâtel and other generals about the Emperor. There were too many young officers in the corps. Dashing courage was valued above all else; method, foresight, and even a love of discipline were underestimated. At all his reviews the Emperor made everything of audacity, courage and luck; for success was essential.

Those who organized, trained the men at the bases, and kept

things going, obtained no recognition if they were not in the Grand Army or had not taken part in such-and-such a battle. No commanding officer was ever brought to book for the losses occasioned by his negligence, his lack of order and discipline, even if two-thirds of his force had been wasted from these causes. If he led a gallant charge at the head of the hundred men left him on the day of battle, he obtained whatever he desired, and nothing was given to the brave lieutenant-colonel who, after fighting his twenty campaigns, was back in the depot organizing and drilling the detachments that were to reinforce the army. He was forgotten, because he had had no chance of contributing any brilliant deeds to the successful affair of the moment. Far be it from me to say that the Emperor did not reward the old soldiers. There are too many instances to prove, on the contrary, that they were the objects of his solicitude when they remained with the army or were invalidated out; but so long as they remained in the depots, even in the interests of the service, they obtained no promotion until they returned to the fighting line.

Undoubtedly this system had the advantage of making all officers anxious to get back to the front, but it was really detrimental to the service and to the best service, for the depots were not given to the most capable men. Any honest investigator who would compare the conditions of his corps at the beginning of the campaign with its state at the end, seeking the causes of loss and wastage, would certainly find that it was not the enemy's guns which had done most damage to our cavalry. The marches were too long; many necessities were lacking; few non-commissioned officers had experience, and most of the troopers had received little or no drilling. The fine state in which some corps were maintained to the very last moment, compared with the disorder and destruction suffered by others with no longer length of service, proves that our greatest foe was indiscipline, and the disorders that followed in its train originated in the negligence of the commanding officers.

The Emperor had altogether 715 saddle and draught horses in Russia to draw the wagons loaded with provisions of all

kinds as well as a great outfit of tents. As his headquarters were always the last to arrive, and that invariably in a place already laid waste by reason of the whole army having previously passed by, it was necessary to carry everything with us or seek what we needed from a distance.<sup>1</sup> I have, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> It must be also be observed that the various administrations did not furnish a thousand pounds of bread, a hundred trusses of hay, nor a particle of oats to the Emperor's Household throughout the campaign. (*Note by Caulaincourt.*)

The composition and organization of the Emperor's military train during the Russian Campaign were regulated by a decree of January 15, 1812. The service, under the orders of the Master of the Horse, comprised: (1) a light service; (2) expedition service; (3) one for heavy baggage; (4) saddle-horses.

The light service consisted of six canteen carts, each drawn by a pair of mules, four light tents, each carried by a mule, two *muttres-d'hôtel*, two valets, three cooks, four footmen, eight grooms, two harness-makers or smiths, all mounted on horses or mules. Besides these there were two pack-mules with the office furniture and pharmacy, two small forges drawn by four horses, and two light vehicles for provisions.

The expedition service comprised the light carriages for the use of His Majesty and suite, the tents of the Imperial quarters, the mobile staff, part of the office, light baggage; in all 26 vehicles drawn by 160 horses.

The heavy baggage service comprised 24 vehicles drawn by 240 horses. Among these were the Emperor's travelling coach (*berline*), two following *berlines*, a reserve *calèche*, two carriages for the secretaries, maps and documents, a wardrobe carriage, two provision carts, eight wagons for bread, office, cellar, stores, linen, plate, etc. The saddle-horse service comprised ten brigades of thirteen horses each, namely: two battle-chargers and a riding-horse for the Emperor, one for the Master of the Horse, one for the page on duty, one for the equerry on duty, one for the surgeon, one for the groom, one for the mameluke, one for the guide, three for under-grooms.

The effective total, including the reserves, was kept up at 52 carriages and 630 horses and mules.

The Imperial camp was composed thus: The Emperor's tent, that of the high officials, of the aides-de-camp, of the orderly officers, of the officers on duty, sergeant-majors, quartermasters and secretaries, in short of the entire suite. The Emperor's tent was composed of two reception rooms, an office, and a bedroom, the whole carried in a single wagon. The Prince of Neuchatel's camp had to be installed at a hundred yards' distance from the Emperor's.

had experience of what can be done by method and care in supplementing the provender both in kind, quality, and quantity. All persons attached to headquarters were in the same plight, but as none had more than a few horses it was much easier to find and provide fodder. It is also an admitted fact that the mounts of the Emperor and his suite made much longer and faster rides than other horses. Yet on reaching Wilna on December 8th, during the retreat, only eighty horses had been lost out of the 715 with which we had started the campaign. The mortality was not noticeable until after the crossing of the Niemen, and especially after our arrival at Insterburg, which proves that the losses were occasioned by a too abundant supply furnished without the precautions that should have been taken after rigorous privations and excessive fatigue. A few well-advised steps would have prevented this mortality.

I enter into these particulars in order to answer in advance all the fables that have been told, and that will yet be told, as to the effects of the cold, the lack of provisions, and so forth. During the retreat horses fell and lay by the roadside chiefly because they were not properly shod for crossing the ice, and having once fallen and vainly attempted to rise, they ended by lying where they fell, and were cut up for food before they were even dead. With frost-nails, and the exercise of a little care, the greater number would certainly have been saved.

Before leaving the subject of Moscow it is essential that I should say something about its administration. The Duke of Treviso had been charged with the government of the city. He succeeded Count Durosnel, and M. de Lesseps, formerly Consul-General at Petersburg, had been placed at the head of the administration.<sup>1</sup> This estimable gentleman was on his way back to Paris with his wife and eight children when a courier caught him up as he was disembarking at Danzig, and handed him imperative orders to proceed at once to Imperial headquarters, then at the gates of Moscow. Despite his

<sup>1</sup> See p. 295.

urgent request to be excused all duties, after a week the Emperor appointed him *Intendant*. This excellent man did all that he could, and like the Governor, put a stop to many evils, among them the issue of false paper, the theft of many small sums, and the destruction of such archives as had been saved from the fire. It was the honourable and worthy Lesseps who raised more opposition than anyone else to the proclamation for the liberation of the serfs; it was he who collected, sheltered, nourished, and in fact saved, quite a number of unfortunate men, women and children, whose houses had been burned, and who were wandering like ghosts amid the ruins of the Capital. On this occasion he showed that he had not forgotten the thirty years' hospitality he had met with in Russia, more especially between Kamchatka and Petersburg when M. de La Pérouse, with whom he had landed, sent him with despatches to France.<sup>1</sup> I was an eyewitness of this estimable man's efforts; he often confided in me his disappointments and all the sorrow that so much distressed him. It is only right that I should render justice to the honourable sentiments that have been his invariable guide.

The Emperor had caused a proclamation to be prepared giving the serfs their freedom. This was early in October. Some dregs of the lowest classes of society, and a few firebrands (German artisans who made themselves these peoples' mouthpieces and egged them on), raised an outcry and, incited by a few, demanded that this should be done. These men even carried their demand to the Emperor, announcing that hopes of freedom were germinating in the heads of the peasants, and that instead of finding himself surrounded by enemies, the Emperor would have millions of auxiliaries if he conceded this measure. Yet was not this measure radically opposed to his acknowledged principles? He felt, and some

<sup>1</sup> In 1785 M. de Lesseps had been appointed as Interpreter in La Pérouse's expedition. He accompanied it as far as Kamchatka where, on September 29, 1787, he was ordered to proceed to France with the records of the expedition. He reached Petersburg on September 22, 1788, after a dangerous journey. He was presented to Louis XVI at Versailles on the following October 18th.

time later observed to me, that the prejudice and fanaticism excited against us in the minds of the populace would prove a great obstacle, for some time at least, and that consequently he would have to bear all the odium of such a measure without reaping the benefits.<sup>1</sup>

The disorder and pillage which inevitably followed our forced marches had caused the initial damage and alienated the peasants. The fires that had been so skilfully started, for which the peasants blamed the French; the different language; the crusade preached against us by the Russian clergy—all these combined to show us to these superstitious people as barbarians who had come to overturn their altars, steal their goods, ravish their women and children and lead them into captivity. And so they fled from us as from wild beasts.

Time would have been essential if we were to establish relations with the inhabitants. Agreement needed an exchange of views. As matters stood, there was no one to discuss with. The Russian Government had shown its wisdom in sending away the inhabitants before the French arrived. In these grave circumstances it can be said that they lacked neither talent nor forethought. This being the case a proclamation which, apart from anything else, was not in accordance with the Emperor's views, could have served no purpose; for it would have had no effect, and would have imparted to the war a revolutionary character which would have been highly unseemly in a monarch who, with reason, prided himself on having restored social order to Europe. So the preparation of this proclamation was merely a threat; it deceived nobody who really knew the Emperor.

It was one of those many methods tried by him to see if the threat would produce any effect. He wished, if possible, to intimidate. These were thunderbolts, in which he showed only the lightning and kept back the thunder. He left nothing untried to bring about the negotiations which he desired, but this proclamation was not a device that entered

<sup>1</sup> See Napoleon's reply to the address of the Senate, December 20, 1812. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19389.)

into his political scheme, although he spoke as if it were a definite project.

One day the Emperor even said to me:

"Like you, Lesseps is against emancipation. Yet there are some, who know as much about the Russians as you, who think differently. You are opposed to it because it would not be playing fairly against your friend Alexander. But those fires were not fair either. They would fully justify reprisals. Otherwise, I think exactly as you do about this emancipation. It is impossible to tell where such a measure would lead. Up to the present, except that Alexander has burned his towns to prevent us occupying them, we have played the game by each other. There have been no offensive proclamations, no insults. He is wrong not to come to terms now that we have met on the duelling ground. We should soon be in agreement and remain the best of friends."

According to orders given immediately on the news of the battle at Woronovo,<sup>1</sup> the Duke of Treviso was entrusted with the difficult task of concentrating on the Kremlin for the purpose of holding Moscow. He had the Delaborde Division of the Young Guard, which had recently arrived,<sup>2</sup> and some unmounted cavalry.<sup>3</sup> The Major-General enjoined the Duke of Abrantes to be prepared to make a movement between the 20th and the 22nd, and the regiments on the march were ordered to halt and remain wherever they were.<sup>4</sup> He ordered the evacuation of the wounded, but there were no means of transport. The arms in the depot established in

<sup>1</sup> Winkovo. After this affair Murat retired upon Woronovo.

<sup>2</sup> This Division, at first detained at Smolensk, on August 28th received orders to rejoin the army. (*Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19152 and 19164. Napoleon to Berthier, April 27th and September 1st. )

<sup>3</sup> *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19285 and 19286. Napoleon to Berthier and to Mortier, October 18th.

<sup>4</sup> Junot and the 8th Corps were at Mojaisk preserving the army communications.

the Kolotskoie<sup>1</sup> Abbey had to be destroyed. Between those dates General Baraguay d'Hilliers was to take the greater part of his forces from Smolensk to Yelnia.<sup>2</sup>

I ought to state that our army had received few reinforcements at Moscow, only two or three regiments and the Delaborde division which I have already mentioned, as well as the Pino Italian division.<sup>3</sup> The Emperor had left all his reinforcements on the lines of communication or had given them to the corps on the Dwina.

Our army was composed thus :

	<i>Infantry.</i>	<i>Cavalry.</i>	<i>Artillery.</i>
Guard . . .	17,000	4,500	112 guns
1st Corps . . .	27,000	1,400	130 „
3rd Corps . . .	9,400	850	66 „
4th Corps . . .	23,500	1,600	88 „
5th Corps . . .	4,600	850	45 „
8th Corps . . .	2,000	760	32 „
Dismounted Cavalry .	4,000	—	—
Cavalry Reserve . .	—	4,800	60 „
<hr/> Total . . .	<hr/> 87,500	<hr/> 14,760	<hr/> 533 guns <sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> After the battle of the Moskowa the Emperor installed a depot of artillery and cavalry in the villages round the Abbey of Kolotskoie, situated on the Smolensk-Borodino road, and two leagues in front of the latter village. The Abbey itself was turned into an hospital for such of the wounded as could not be moved. Cf. *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19189. Napoleon to Berthier, Mojaïsk, September 10, 1812.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Correspondance de Napoléon*, 19281. Napoleon to Berthier, Moscow, September 17th. Yelnia is 22 leagues from Moscow on the Kalouga road. This Division, given to Baraguay, formerly Governor of Smolensk, had been formed on October 6th, with the Illyrian Regiment and various marching units.

<sup>3</sup> General Pino, who commanded the 15th Division (Italians and Dalmatians, 4th Corps, Eugène), had been left behind at Kamen and then at Inkowo. On August 23rd he was ordered to rejoin the 4th Corps.

<sup>4</sup> Amounting to 102,260 men and 533 guns.

To these must be added the *gendarmerie*, the men at the parks, the engineers, the coach- and stable-men, and the ambulance men. These last amounted to some 8000.

Kutusoff, on the other hand, had absorbed all the levies, filled up his regiments, and reinforced himself with new corps and a considerable force of cavalry, notably Cossacks from the Don and other provinces. He had even concentrated all the infantry detachments originally placed at the disposal of the skirmishers round Moscow, as well as those with Wintzingeroode who covered the Petersburg and Dwina roads. As no prisoners were made, and no spy ventured to penetrate the Russian lines, we were entirely ignorant of what was happening and the Emperor obtained no information whatsoever.



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